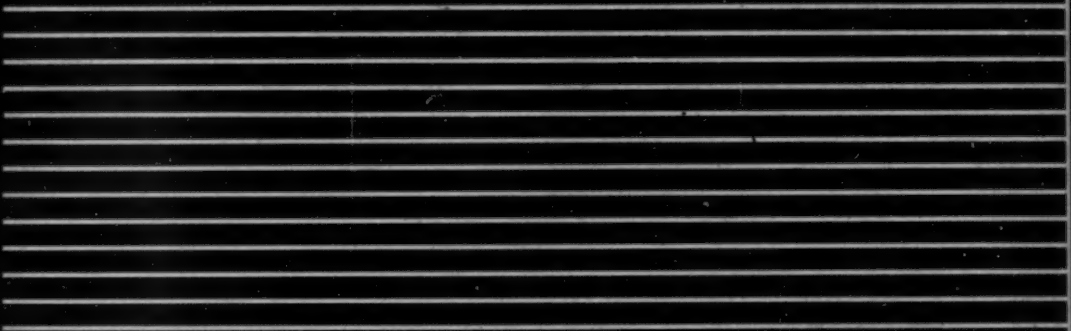


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THE SURVIVAL OF UPTON SINCLAIR

GRANVILLE HICKS¹

Upton Sinclair has been writing books for more than forty years. He began, back in 1898 when he was only twenty, by turning out eight thousand words a day of military and naval juveniles for Street and Smith; and by these labors he supported himself for the next five or six years. He nevertheless found time to write serious novels, and *Springtime and Harvest* (later called *King Midas*) appeared in 1901. He made his first sensation with *The Journal of Arthur Stirling* in 1903 and had his first financial success with *The Jungle* in 1906. His most recent financial success goes by the name of *Dragon's Teeth* and is dated 1942.

Anyone who knows American literary history for the past half-century knows the importance of mere survival. It may be an accident, or it may not be, that so many of Sinclair's contemporaries—Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Jack London, for instance—died prematurely. It is not an accident that Theodore Dreiser, whose career began at about the same time as Sinclair's, has published no novel in more than fifteen years. We are all familiar with the declining reputations of Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, James Branch Cabell, and others who

have shone more or less brilliantly in these past decades. The fact that Thomas Wolfe's entire life-span fell within the period of Sinclair's literary career is dramatic rather than significant, but it does help to remind us that, since the days of Howells and James, the brief career has been the rule rather than the exception in American letters. I can think of only two or three other American authors in their sixties who are doing work of importance, and of none who has been writing over so long an interval of time.

During this entire period Upton Sinclair's work has only once been in fashion. *The Jungle*, coming in the midst of the muckraking decade, appealed to the readers of Steffens and Baker and Tarbell, to the readers of Robert Herrick's *Memoirs of an American Citizen* and David Graham Phillips' *The Plum Tree*. But the muckraking movement declined, and Upton Sinclair went out of fashion, though he refused to acknowledge the fact. Through the twenties he remained a propagandist, moralist, reformer—everything that Mencken said an author ought not to be. The socially-conscious thirties should have been more tolerant, but left-wingers—myself included—held against him his middle-class background and preoccupations, his moralism, his in-

¹ Author of *The Great Tradition*, *Only One Storm*, etc.

difference to Marxism. The pact between Germany and Russia closed a period and interrupted, if it did not end, a good many literary careers; but Upton Sinclair went right on working, as he had done through all the other crises and changes in the intellectual climate.

The Lanny Budd series—*World's End* (1940), *Between Two Worlds* (1941), and *Dragon's Teeth* (1942)—has again brought Sinclair into popular favor, and these books have even received kinder words from the reviewers than their author is used to. But he still does not exist for the serious critics, especially the younger ones—those nourished on the seven types of ambiguity. The story goes that two of the younger critics were talking together, and one of them said that he was working on a study of William Dean Howells. "I don't see," said the other, "how you can be interested in Howells. He isn't difficult enough." Neither is Upton Sinclair.

Soon after the writing of *The Journal of Arthur Stirling*, which was an appeal for the special treatment of highly endowed individuals, Sinclair was converted to socialism, and it was as a Socialist that he wrote *The Jungle*. The surprising profits of that volume—the first of several fortunes to be spent on his causes—went to the establishment of a Socialist colony in New Jersey. In the same year, 1906, he was a Socialist candidate for Congress, making the first of half-a-dozen campaigns for public office. There was a scandal growing out of the Socialist colony, and a few years later there was a divorce scandal. Always there was turmoil and controversy. In 1914, Sinclair picketed Rockefeller's offices in the interests of the Colorado miners. In 1923, Los Angeles police arrested him for reading the Constitution. In 1927 he challenged

Boston's censorship. And in 1934, having secured the Democratic nomination for the governorship of California, he went before the voters with his EPIC plan and was defeated in a campaign of singular and sinister virulence.

In spite of all this, books and pamphlets appeared at the rate of two or three a year. Some were good and some were bad. Although there are some critics who admire *Love's Pilgrimage* and *Sylvia*, and though there is much in both books to show the diversity of Sinclair's talent, it seems to me that *King Coal* (1917) is the first book after *The Jungle* to indicate his full power as a novelist of the social scene. If the people of the upper class are sometimes stiff and inhuman, the workers have great vitality; and so has Hal, the aristocratic hero. What is most impressive in *King Coal*, however, is the evidence that Sinclair had learned how to assimilate the vast quantities of information his restless mind collects. There are no solid blocks of exposition in *King Coal* as there are in *The Jungle*; the documentation is there, but it is an essential part of the story.

Rather surprisingly, Sinclair did not continue the artistic advance made in *King Coal*. The fiction written between 1917 and 1927, when *Oil* appeared, is mostly trivial and inferior. But within that decade Sinclair did write his great series of pamphlets: *The Profits of Religion*, *The Brass Check*, *The Goose Step*, *The Goslings*, *Mammonart*, and *Money Writes*. All of these books have the same virtues and the same faults. For example, both *The Brass Check* and *The Goose Step*, which had the greatest influence, are tremendous collections of facts—facts of the most startling import to anyone who had believed that our great newspapers and our great universities were as impartial as they pretended to be. To have

these facts brought together was sensational and extremely useful. On the other hand, as many critics gleefully pointed out, trivial incidents, often out of Sinclair's experience, were treated in as much detail as scandals of national magnitude, and the very quantities of factual material tended to get in the way of an understanding of journalism or education as such. Yet, whatever their faults, these books stand as examples of muck-raking at its best: the patient quest for information that men have done their best to conceal and the fearless publication of what these same men are determined, by whatever means necessary, to keep unknown.

Oil came in 1927—the same year as *Money Writes*—and *Boston* in the next year. Here was the best work Sinclair had thus far done; and *Mountain City*, which appeared in 1929, was not much inferior. But again his creative career was interrupted when he responded to the depression with a series of pamphlets and finally with his EPIC campaign. For a time this campaign seemed to have exhausted him, and an incautious critic might have said that another American novelist was taking his place on the shelf. He wrote much, but there was little in what he wrote to suggest that he was more than a persistent propagandist. Yet it was in these years that he was preparing for the most ambitious and the most impressive undertaking of his whole career.

Before we turn to the Lanny Budd series, it might be well to look at one of Sinclair's short novels of the late thirties. *No Pasaran* (1937) is the work of a man interested solely in getting quick results. Even when it was published, when it caught so immediately at the emotions the Spanish struggle was arousing, it seemed superficial, and today it seems

ludicrous. The easy conversion of Rudy Messer, the villainous character of his Nazi relatives, the gross simplifications of the political issues, the sketchy treatment of the actual fighting, and the kindergarten style—"Such a good time they had!" "How happy they were!"—all these make the little novel almost a burlesque. It is as good an example as any of what an acute social conscience can do when literary conscience is nonexistent.

It is because Sinclair's eagerness to help the cause can mislead him into writing such a book as *No Pasaran*, because he has been so publicly and even ostentatiously the partisan, that it is hard for those who disagree with him to think of his work as anything but biased. When, therefore, critics find themselves forced to admit that any particular volume is fair, they put it down as an exception. Reviewers of *Oil*, for example, noted with surprise that J. Arnold Ross, the big oil man, was not a black-hearted villain. The next year, the same reviewers with the same surprise reported that *Boston* was, among other things, a first-rate and by no means unsympathetic study of New England's upper classes. The truth is that Sinclair has always had the ability to withdraw himself from the struggle and to write with an astonishing degree of objectivity. He has not always exercised that gift, as *No Pasaran* and many other books show, but in the major novels he portrays the events he has taken part in, if not from all sides, then at least from more sides than one. Even here he is still the partisan, still the believer in justice and in his particular conceptions of how justice is to be achieved; and he has no intention of letting you forget it; but he is also the historian, doing his best to discover how things happened and why. He will lecture you for all he is worth, but he will not conceal from you

anything he sees—and he sees a great deal.

It may be that the Soviet-Nazi pact, which exposed so many left-wing fallacies, forced upon Sinclair a reconsideration of all his theories. It may be that the war itself, dwarfing all lesser evils, inspired him to take the long view. Whatever the reason, he undertook the Lanny Budd series in a spirit largely free from dogmatism and narrow bias. If he hates fascism, longs to abolish war, and dreams of a better social order, that is merely to say that he is still a passionate humanitarian. But clearly there is no question here of his trying to influence readers to some specific action. His aim is that of any author—to show the world as he sees it.

What the new series makes clear, in the first place, is that Sinclair is primarily a historical novelist whose field is contemporary history. And he always has been. *The Jungle*, *King Coal*, *Oil*, and *Boston*—four novels generally regarded as his best—are all concerned with important contemporary events. In the same genre are *The Flivver King*, *The Wet Parade*, *Jimmie Higgins*, and a dozen others. As another novelist might turn to the Revolution or the Civil War (as Sinclair himself did turn to the Civil War in *Manassas*), so he has turned to the Teapot Dome scandals or the Sacco-Vanzetti case or the rise of fascism. The use of documents, the combination of fact and fiction, the treatment of background—all these follow the pattern of the conventional historical novel.

Manassas, as a matter of fact, published in 1904, laid down the formula. One feels sure in this, as in later works, that Upton Sinclair started with the historical events about which he wanted to write and then proceeded to the contriv-

ance of characters and subsidiary actions. The novel, planned as the first of a trilogy, is intended to present the events leading up to the Civil War and the opening campaign of the war itself. Since Sinclair wishes to show antecedent conditions on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line, he has his hero born in the South and then takes him to the North. Thereafter, Allan Montague becomes almost ubiquitous, for he is at Harper's Ferry when John Brown raids the arsenal, at Charleston when Sumter is fired upon, at Baltimore when the riots take place, and at the battle of Bull Run. Montague, however, does not merely serve as a spectator of history, though that is an important part of his function; he acts and is acted upon. Having him born in the South not only facilitates exposition but also permits conversion, a device of which Sinclair has made frequent use.

The structure of the new series, like the structure of *Manassas* nearly forty years ago, is determined by its historical theme. *World's End* begins in 1913, and, as its opening chapters lay down the necessary foundation of exposition, they also portray the age of innocence in France, England, and Germany. To the war itself Sinclair devotes relatively little attention, but enough to give a sense of its personal tragedies and social effects. On the peace he spends more than two hundred pages, and when the story is resumed in *Between Two Worlds* the historical pattern is in the foreground. The hero attends several post-war conferences, watches sessions of the League of Nations, interviews Mussolini and is involved in the assassination of Matteotti, sees Hitler before and during the Beerhall Putsch, briefly visits Russia, and ends up in the United States in time for the Wall Street collapse. *Dragon's Teeth*, concentrating on the four years from 1930 to

1934, also concentrates on the single theme of German fascism. Lanny not only hears Hitler speak in public but talks with him privately. He meets Strasser, Goebbels, Göring. Then, in the latter half of the book, through his attempts to rescue Johannes and Freddi Robbin, he turns from the role of observer to that of participant—as Allan Montague did with the battle of Bull Run in *Manassas*. The climax is the blood purge of June, 1934.

In short, the three volumes thus far written—Sinclair is at work on a sequel—are so contrived as to embrace almost all the crucial events in the relations of the great powers over a period of twenty years. To accomplish this, Sinclair has to have a hero of a particular sort, and he has ingeniously created what he wants in Lanny Budd. The illegitimate child of a munitions-maker and a great beauty, rootless, well to do, inevitably precocious, Lanny plausibly turns up at the right places at the right times. He has a life of his own, apart from the events he watches and the experts he listens to, but he remains a character for Sinclair's purposes, not a character in his own right. I do not mean for a moment that he is a mere dummy; on the contrary, I am constantly impressed by the substance and vitality of Sinclair's creation; but surely Lanny is not one of the more memorable figures of modern literature. One will never think of him as one thinks of Philip Carey or Paul Morel or Studs Lonigan or Eugene Gant.

We may as well accept the fact that Lanny and all the other characters in the series are what E. M. Forster calls "flat." They have two dimensions, not three. "These imaginary persons," Upton Sinclair says, "are more real to me than the people I meet in the outside world." Conceivably that is true. They are at least as

real to me, by and large, as the people I meet. But of course the great characters of fiction are much more real than that. It is indicative that some of the best characters in the book—Basil Zaharoff, for instance, and Isadora Duncan—are historical persons with well-documented lives. The highest type of creative imagination leaves documents far behind.

But flatness of characterization is, I think, an inherent defect of the genre in which Sinclair is writing. In the historical novel, whether its subject is in the remote or the recent past, *if* the emphasis is on history, attention is directed outward rather than inward. Characters fall in love: Sinclair says they experienced rapture, and that is that. Mme de Bruynes dies: Lanny plays sad music and reads sad books, and that is that. One cannot say that Sinclair has a meager imagination, for there are magnificent passages to prove the contrary; but one can say that the very nature of both his practical and his literary interests will not allow him to exploit his insight.

Less inherent in the form are other shortcomings. The writing, if seldom downright bad, if never comparable, for example, to Dreiser's worst, is not distinguished. Years ago Sinclair perfected a fluent, lucid style, easy to read and probably not very hard to write, and, as he says, he can turn out his thousand words a day with no Flaubertian agonies. No experimentalist of these recent years, in fact no writer of the twentieth century, has influenced his style. He editorializes as readily as any Victorian, is not afraid of clichés, uses and sometimes misuses the colloquialisms of the day. It is a style rather painful to those who crave either artifice or art, but it is clear and it does move.

In 1929, Upton Sinclair asked Lincoln

Steffens to read the manuscript of a new novel. Steffens replied:

Get ye behind me. Here I am trying to concentrate upon and get done the story of my Life, with a publisher naming dates, and you come along with an offer to let me read your new novel! No. I must not accept. I must stick to my job, which would be easy if I had got where you have got: where whatever I wrote was just so good, no better, no worse, ever. Do you realize that achievement of yours, that you have found your style? And your stuff? And yourself? Lucky devil! Unlucky me!

The justice of Steffens' statement lies, of course, in its characteristic and sweetly ironic ambiguity. Steffens, who never wrote a letter that did not have stylistic distinction, who worried about Jack Reed's finding "your form, your lay, your line," who advised his wife "to wait and look and study a scene or an idea till it takes on words," was, and knew he was, incomparably more the artist than his friend. But in praising Sinclair, as he also knew, he was speaking truth.

Many of Sinclair's critics have recognized the faults but not the achievement. I am willing to grant that Sinclair's aim, in the Lanny Budd series and in almost all his novels, automatically bars him from the highest range of literary achievement. I am willing, as I once would not have been, to grant that great art transcends the purely local and topical not by soaring off into some never-never land but by pushing downward deeper and deeper into reality. One need not raise the old question of eternal values to justify the assertion that there are such qualities as depth and breadth. And Sinclair is committed to the relatively shallow and the relatively narrow. Yet, what he has done, he has done well, and it is time to stop depreciating him in comparison with those who are to be praised only for their aims and not for their

achievements. If Tolstoy came by the dozen, we could afford to smile at Upton Sinclair, but the actual state of contemporary literature scarcely warrants condescension.

The reader is not likely to be deeply moved by the Lanny Budd books, and if he is moved, it is probably because of what he personally associates with the events described and not because of anything Sinclair has written. Yet one reads the books with constant interest and, moreover, with a constant feeling of recognition: this is the world one lives in. That is not a feeling one gets from the greater part of modern fiction. The average person enters the world of Wolfe or Hemingway or Faulkner—to say nothing of the worlds of Joyce and Proust and Mann—with a sense of strangeness; one believes but is baffled. The world Sinclair describes, though it is physically remote from us and the characters live in circumstances very different from ours, is perfectly recognizable. It is the world we read about daily in the newspapers.

Not in the deepest sense, but still in a real one, the reader lives through the great historic events of the past quarter-century. One becomes, not a participant, but, like Lanny Budd, a spectator. One sees and, at least to a point, understands. Take, for example, the long account of the peace conference in *World's End*. Sinclair tells us that he not only consulted dozens of books but also submitted his manuscript to eight or ten men who were on the American staff at the conference. The resultant knowledge he uses to take us from large to small and from small to large again. If Wilson and Clemenceau, Colonel Lawrence and Colonel House, Lincoln Steffens and George D. Herron, come on the stage, so do many fictional characters who stand well enough for the anonymous hundreds also involved in the

peacemaking and the anonymous millions who were affected by it. "A friend of mine," Sinclair writes, "asked an authority on modern fiction the question: 'Has anybody ever used the Peace Conference in a novel?' and the reply was: 'Could anybody?' Well, I thought somebody could, and now I think somebody has." One could argue about "used," and one could argue about "novel," but no one can deny that Sinclair has got the conference into a book and in such a way that it has new meaning for his readers.

And so with the whole panorama of these recent times. I have recently read several novels concerned with victims of Nazi terror. Any one of these novels, I admit, gives a more vivid and abiding sense of that terror than does *Dragon's Teeth*. Qualitatively, therefore, they may give a deeper insight into fascism than Sinclair gives. But there are other elements to be taken into consideration. What these novels reveal to the reader is the nature of oppression and brutality; but oppression and brutality, unfortunately, are not restricted to Germany, and the most telling scenes, *mutatis mutandis*, might have taken place in many ages and in many lands. Thus the authors, in varying degree, escape the topical and local, but at the same time they lose something I suspect they wanted to get—the peculiar quality of fascism. And this Sinclair does get, precisely because he is rooted in time and place.

The eagerness with which the public has read the personal histories of the journalists shows how badly we need interpreters. People have read these autobiographies not merely because they contain information but also because they are personal, because they bring history into some sort of meaningful contact with the reader's life. They perform, in other words, part of the interpreting and

humanizing function that the novel has traditionally performed. But, intimate and flexible as some of these stories are, they are still held to the pattern that one man's life imposes. Sinclair, by boldly adopting as many of the resources of fiction as are available for his purpose, has gone beyond the journalists—perhaps not very far but far enough to give his readers a satisfaction the journalists could not give.

Sinclair has written:

Fate has put you and me upon the earth in one of the critical periods of human history; a dangerous time, but exciting—and certainly there has never been a time when it has been possible for the ordinary person to know so much about what is going on. The field is so enormous, the issues so crucial, that I, as a novelist, have for years been running away from them.

One smiles a little at that. Here is Upton Sinclair, who can say so easily that so-and-so was sad or so-and-so was happy, who is so readily satisfied with the broad, casual stroke—and yet even he was running away from the story of world crisis. Is it any wonder that other writers, the kind who strain for the exact shade of an emotion, have shunned such a theme? Or is it, on the other hand, any wonder that Sinclair has handled the theme only at a sacrifice of this subtlety of shading, of depth of psychological analysis and intensity of feeling?

What I have been saying is that Sinclair's faults, or some of them at least, are almost as essential to his achievement as his virtues. Yet, of course, in the end it is the virtues that count. His enormous personal knowledge, acquired the hard way, his patient scholarship, his self-discipline—as Steffens said, he has found his style, his stuff, and himself—his integrity, his social passion, his courage and generosity—all these explain why no one else could have done anything compara-

ble to *World's End* and its sequels. It may be true, as some critics say, that in the future only social historians will be interested in his work; but even that is a

larger claim on posterity than most of his contemporaries will be able to make, and in any case the debt our generation owes him is enormous.

MAXWELL ANDERSON: THE TRAGEDY OF ATTRITION

HAROLD H. WATTS¹

Tragedy is written about individuals, not about societies or society. To be sure, the individual is thought of in relation to society or at least to other individuals produced by society. Nevertheless, plays like Elmer Davis' *Street Scene* are not tragic. They purport to deal with the decay of entire sections of cities; whatever start of sympathy we may feel at the outset is soon generalized and impersonalized. We leave the theater as we rise from the reading of a sociological treatise. Questions like "What are the causes of these conditions? What counterirritants can be found?" occupy our minds. Our reaction ends on the level of intellectual analysis—a level on which (justly or not) we stand apart from the object analyzed.

This attitude is, of course, exactly opposite from that which we assume in the presence of tragic drama. There our reaction, fixed on the central figure, is emotional as well as intellectual. The relation of the character to other people or to an entire society is also our relation. In our judgment of this relation there remains, no matter how intellectualized our final analysis, a residuum of personal uneasiness and perplexity.

Plays like *Street Scene* are the more typical products of our culture which, with its belief in the efficacy of sociology

and economics, makes us willing to accept as just the dramatic picture which shows the individual at the mercy of forces too gigantic for him to face. They are forces which can be controlled only by social planning, revision of international trade treaties, and disarmament. In such plays there can be no question of the moral integrity of the individual. He is lost—the three acts neatly demonstrate this.

Considered in relation to this general tendency, the effort of Maxwell Anderson as tragic dramatist is most striking. Although Anderson's mind gives every sign of being a product of modern education, he does not write sociological drama. His plays are not graduate seminars in the problems of city life; they are a kind of tragedy, though not archaistic tragedy, recalling a dead society which regarded the individual as the suitable subject for serious drama. Anderson is conscious of—nay, he is obsessed with—a universe that parts of modern culture combine to make. He knows his propaganda analysis, his Freud, his evolutionism, and his impersonal interstellar spaces. This knowledge triumphs over his conscience as a historical playwright. He may present characters who lived in a time when ordinary tragedy was easily conceivable, but he translates them into agnostics of the nineteenth or twentieth century. They

¹ Department of English, Purdue University.

always ask God's help, with the reservation "... if there is a God."

Yet only a belief in the existence of God, the Fates, or some other scheme of retributive justice makes the writing of tragedy seem a valid act. How then, for a man who for the most part has believed in none of these, is it possible to write tragedy instead of plays like *Street Scene*, which are imperfect footnotes to treatises in social science? If the individual is the chance by-product of august world forces, why direct attention to him? His decisions were made for him when he was in the womb; his contribution to the course of human history is negligible.

These questions Anderson has faced. It would have been an easier act to face in some other direction; but Anderson has continued to believe in the importance of the individual despite evidence to the contrary—evidence that, until very recently, has had the full assent of the dramatist's intellect.

I

That Anderson has managed to write tragedy at all, believing what he believed, is remarkable. Further, his tragedies are, in their particular way, real tragedies. They do not dodge and shuffle; they do not (except in occasional phrases) represent a dilettante imitation of Shakespeare and other Elizabethans. They contain a tragic insight that is notably a product of our age—perhaps the single one possible to our age as Anderson and those who share his background have envisaged it.

In an early play, *Elizabeth the Queen*, Anderson has the aged queen say to her lover Essex, when she presents him with a ring:

Take it because
The years are long, and full of sharp, wearing
days

That wear out what we are and what we have
been

And change us into people that we do not know,
Living among strangers. Lest you and I who
love

Should wake some morning strangers and ene-
mies

In an alien world, far off; take this ring, my
lover.

Plainly, to the aging woman her love for the young man is a rock. But it is a rock unfortunately placed. On it drip—and beat, in time of flood—waters that will alter its firm outlines. The rock lacks power to turn aside the trickles and torrents that wear it away. The Cecils and Burghleys and Bacons will have their way—do have their way—so that by the end of the play the love, the fixed rock, is changed and offers footing to neither of the lovers. That which both regarded as the most admirable fact in their lives has endured for too long the attrition of the waters—the impersonal forces of dynastic ambitions, palace chicane, and public opinion. That which gave the two characters dignity and worth as individuals is (both admit) worn away.

This kind of tragedy—a tragedy that we may call a "tragedy of attrition," remembering the action of the waters on the rock of the lovers' resolution—displays the basic pattern of nearly all Anderson's tragedies. If the basic formula of older tragedy may be phrased "The character falls and dies," Anderson's variant would be "The character endures and dies." In one word, "endures," is the clue to the difference between Anderson's tragedy and older tragedy: a difference that is worth perceiving not merely for an understanding of Anderson's considerable achievement. More generally it will demonstrate a cul-de-sac which many present-day writers skirt by writing sociological or genetic treatises—treatises in which man is not considered

in himself but as a sum of impulses beyond his control. Unlike these others, Anderson has explored every foot of the narrow alley he chanced upon. He has cracked his head against unseen bastions. He has many times thought he has found an exit and then has had to turn back.

The "purest" example of the working-out of the formula, "The character endures and dies," is found in *Mary of Scotland*, another early play. In *Elizabeth the Queen* the lovers have to fear change from within themselves, as well as change enforced from without. But in *Mary of Scotland* and in most of the other plays the attritive forces come from without. Thus Mary is represented as coming to Scotland cherishing an altogether admirable resolve: to be a just, loving, gay, and tolerant queen. The play related how men like John Knox and Mary's half-brother, Moray, how the Protestant bigotry of her gloomy people, how untoward circumstances, beat against the rock of Mary's resolve. Under this abuse her resolve (unlike the lovers' in *Elizabeth the Queen*) does not change into something it was not. Even when neither Bothwell nor her Catholic adherents can any longer protect Mary and when she is immured in Carlisle Castle, exposed to Elizabeth's taunts, she is unaltering in her certainty that her initial intentions were admirable and that whatever she has done since was done with the purpose of sustaining them. So armed, she can stand boldly in her cell and appeal beyond Elizabeth and her venal courts to the judgment of posterity. For posterity will ratify what the tragic queen knows: that she has held the pose rigidly and that whatever is evil in her story came from without. It is her glory that she never altered her pose by bowing her head or extending her hand to ask compromise. More than this:

her death will be almost a joyful event. It will put her beyond the destructive forces—the hatred and envy—which her pose aroused in the masses of limited human beings. It is as if the granite along the shore can call from the deep the storm that beats against it. But, whereas the granite peak is not removed, Mary is. To her, death is a rescue, an assurance of final glory and vindication in a world that is contradictory and meaningless.

It is at once clear that this is not modern naturalistic "tragedy." Mary's sustained pose precludes any community with the sniveling submissions of Clyde Griffiths in *The American Tragedy*; Clyde offers no resistance to the forces that beat him into a pulp. The Anderson character makes no compromises; the Dreiserian makes them all.

What is less apparent—perhaps to Anderson himself—is that his is not the kind of tragedy that is summed up by the formula: "The character falls and dies." Failure to define justly the points of difference here may explain Anderson's prolonged exploration of his pattern, his cul-de-sac. For at first glance this alley suggests the avenue along which older tragedy moved. Yet it is not that avenue. The older tragedy led to a vista; indeed, it existed to place the audience before some Pisgah-sight of the Promised Land (man's complete destiny). As in Mary's bold hope, Anderson's drama keeps suggesting such a vista—suggests but never presents. With Anderson for guide, we explore hopefully but at the end must face a stone wall.

There are several reasons for this. But the radical difference lies here: enduring is not falling. Both end in death; that is all they have in common. In order to fall, in older tragedy or in Holy Writ, the character must first make a choice; he has been faced with two or more

courses and has preferred one. To prefer, to choose, indicates that man is a free moral agent—that what he “elects” his will enforces. This leads to more than Mary’s resolves, to hold a pose despite all that is malicious and stupid outside of her. That “more” is action. Action implies at least two things: that man’s will expresses itself in the outside world, interfering with what in Anderson are the unadulterated forces of attrition, and that action of any kind induces changes in the nature of the doer—changes either for good or for ill.

However, it may appear that in either case the results are the same. To be sure, impelled by the will, the character acts, instead of enduring, and meets his death; he has chosen badly. But in Anderson the opposition between good and evil is terrifically unambiguous. Good always lies in the pose taken up by the tragic figure, and evil manifests itself in the abrasive, external forces. One man is good, mankind is predeterminedly evil; hence, the endurance contest.²

In older tragedy ambiguity enters. There the conflict is not primarily between good and bad men; it is between the good and the bad in man, in the tragic figure itself. There may be in the action of the will conformity to base desires, as well as to prudent judgments. These base desires (or one of them) constitute the “fatal flaw”; the hero’s will fails to conform to that which is most noble in him—unlike Anderson’s heroes. Therefore, this will expressed in action imposes evil upon man’s self and upon his associates. The material and moral

catastrophe of Macbeth and Othello are (at least partially) of their own making. Their deaths do not result from the clear-cut opposition of good within to evil without, as in Anderson; the mechanism is much more complex. True, there are Iago’s tricks; but there are never lacking certain effects dependent upon the initial weaknesses of the hero and the consequences of those weaknesses when they are expressed in action. Further, the death of such a character—Lear, for example—demonstrates what a resolutely held pose fails to indicate. Man, expressing himself in a faulty action, has a power at his command—within himself or in God—of redeeming himself and offsetting some of the errors he has made.

Seldom does Anderson indicate a specific consciousness that his pattern differs sharply from the older one. Such consciousness would derive from dogmas that, during most of his career, have been beyond Anderson’s horizon line. They were thrust into darkness by the nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinkers who aided the dramatist to form his mind.

Consequently, when Anderson expresses his conscious views on man’s nature, as in *The Feast of Ortolans*, they are either Rousseauistic or anti-Rousseauistic. The acid of civilization has eaten into the once-sharp matrix of man’s mind; the mass of men, once in civilization, cannot resist the envy and grossness that organized society thrusts upon them. These contrasting views provide Anderson with the initial substance of his tragedy. Ready at hand in the masses of mankind are the forces of attrition; and the spacious-minded man, instead of retiring to a cottage to revive the golden age, takes up a pose that could have been sustained without meeting death only in that distant, happy Ar-

² Some would terminate the discussion here by calling Anderson’s characters “contemplatives.” But true contemplatives regard virtues that can be expressed in action, their own or others’. Whatever an Anderson character finds admirable is *ipso facto* certain to prove inoperative.

cadia.³ Living in anything but a golden age, the hero must be godlike; he must hold his pose and suffer notably while the beasts tear and betray.

This division of mankind into victim and betrayers indicates the definite limitation of Anderson's sympathies as a dramatist. The beasts are nonetheless beasts for being part of a deterministic universe—a universe in which a real golden age never existed; and each hero is a god alone in a cosmos hostile to him rather than—what logic suggests—simply indifferent. A composition of these opposed items seldom occurs to Anderson. Older tragedy suggests it: that man can be considered both beast and god, that the beast often dominates the heart that should be ruled by the god. Anderson does not doubt—and his intellectual environment affirms his conviction—that there are servile beasts who can lacerate and that there are gods: creatures who can take up an admirable pose and hold it, creatures essential to the pattern of his tragedy.

A consideration of this position leads one to the central mystery in Anderson's conception of tragic man. There is, doubtless, a mystery at the heart of the older conception; but it is a different one. There the mystery is how man, imperfect, has still some kind of connection with that which can redeem him; it is a mystery which unfolds at the end of the play. In Anderson the mystery antedates the first act. Once we accept the pose and grant that a human being can sustain it, the tragedy Anderson contrives has fewer surprises than a *Q.E.D.* In Act I of *Mary of Scotland* we can foretell Mary's appeal to the judgment of

posterity in Act III. Nothing changes; we may, by the end of the play, see the static pose more clearly. There is no dynamic development of virtues and vices in relation to a character that can alter for better or worse; there is no environment that receives the impress of the individual will; and there is no "recovery" of redemption at the end.

In a world arranged as Anderson regards it the central mystery is this: How does it come into being, this self-denying, nonsociological, nonmaterialistic pose? Nothing in Anderson's intellectual picture of man's place in the universe gives the clue to the origin of the pose. According to this picture, all men are part of the stream that effects attrition; none can offer resistance to it. Yet, that some persons do, history and Anderson's private hope indicate. The existence of such persons can, in Anderson's world, be explained only thus: each man who cherishes a noble pose is, in biological language, a "sport"—a creature displaying inexplicable deviations from the genus. Neither environment nor heredity can properly explain him; yet he exists.

And that is all that, in an inimical, deterministic universe and society, such a sport can do—exist. He can be true to his pose, but he cannot transform it into action—action that might be either disastrous or fruitful. For it is inconceivable (the speeches of many Anderson characters indicate) that one human being, no matter how adamant, can deflect the rays of the light-years or dislodge from man's nature those traits which make him rapacious, gluttonous, and venomous. Therefore, viewed coolly, the heroic immolation of the Anderson heroes is without final significance in the world Anderson believes in. Over these

³ Rudolph of Hapsburg, in *The Masque of Kings*, is the only hero who is temporarily attracted by cottage philosophy.

heroes will rush the foreordained floods, pursuing the only possible course—downward, headlong.

II

Lacking any vista which suggests redemption from resources within man or outside him, Anderson has explored untiringly the better alternative of what must seem to him a dilemma (for he gives no consideration to what would be the comment of a man of sense: that if the universe is as Anderson believes it to be there could be no taking-up of poses at all). Anderson asks again and again: "What is the fate of the man who holds a pose? What, within the narrow limits a pose establishes, are the different courses a man may follow?"

That this curiosity is the motive force of Anderson's effort is proved by the fact noted above, that only in *Mary of Scotland* is the "pure" form of the tragedy of attrition to be seen. The other plays offer variations, slight or striking. They indicate that a kind of hope exists in the mind of the dramatist. What is this hope? Perhaps that by the alteration (but not by the repudiation) of the pattern—"The character endures and dies"—the dramatist may find a secret door; he and those he instructs may, after all, reach an open avenue, not the avenue of old tragedy but one which offers a prospect more heartening than that at the end of *Mary of Scotland*.

"More heartening," one can observe, but not more universally applicable. It is doubtful whether Anderson desires that. For his repugnance to that part of mankind which is the end-product of directionless evolution finds expression in similes involving mud and slime. Only the mysterious sports attract his attention. His plays appeal to those few who,

against all logic and evidence, admit the attraction of holding a pose and dying.

Under these circumstances, what is it that heartens or could hearten the dramatist? He wishes to leave his cul-de-sac for a prospect. What values should that prospect contain or suggest? Something beyond good and evil? Not at all. Anderson is no admirer of Nietzsche, no creator of new virtues. The tragic poses indicate a firm adherence to traditional virtues—virtues, to be sure, which will sink before the rushing forces of attrition. A few of them are faithfulness in love, both sexual and "ideal"; justice in ruling; justice in personal relationships; admiration for truth in itself. The faint undertone of *surhumanite* represents Anderson's feeling that men who adhere to any nonpersonal virtues are necessarily more than mortal. But Anderson does not call good evil and evil good. No pose reveals a "new morality"; it manifests an old and neglected one.

Since his yardstick is that of older tragedy, it is not surprising that one of the variations Anderson imposes on his basic pattern of attrition is a muted repetition of what in old tragedy is the major theme—tragedy consequent upon a misuse of free will. In *Night over Taos* the embattled grandee owes some of his grief to his proud, thoughtless use of the lives of those people subordinate to him. In *The Wingless Victory* the New England hero and his Polynesian wife, Oparre, have, before the play begins, escaped from the heroine's father by committing theft and murder. But in either case the consequences of the faulty choice are subordinate to the spectacle of endurance. The grandee stoically watches the collapse of empire; the New Englander and his wife cherish their love and face the buffets of a parochial community.

Indeed, to Anderson the difficulties contingent upon a faulty choice between alternatives are scarcely more the hero's error than the malign external forces which represent the workings of a deterministic universe. Here one is reminded of the old gnostic doctrine which states that the sins of the flesh do not matter, since the mind exists apart from the flesh. The glory is in the pose; it cannot be dimmed by the occasional miscalculations of will and intelligence. In committing these errors the heroes touch briefly a humanity from which their poses finally draw them aside.

The really important variations—the ramifications that Anderson persists in exploring hopefully—concern the different ways in which the pose may be held and the values to be ascribed to holding it. For the effort is not so simple as Mary, the queen of Scotland, imagines it to be. The process of attrition, as well as the process of choice, has its special risks. Mary is highhearted and is usually oblivious to anything but the purity of her intention. Another character—Rudolph of Hapsburg in *The Masque of Kings*—knows that one may be acutely conscious of the brutality which the world directs against unselfish hopes. Rudolph's mind acknowledges almost at the outset that he is doomed. Nevertheless, he persists with a determination that, if displayed in a selfish cause, would deserve the name "animal vitality." But this fixity of purpose must be termed "nonanimal vitality," since Rudolph—like the less intelligent characters—persists in a cause that will assure his material ruin.

Less skeptical in his adherence, in his display of nonanimal vitality, is Mio in *Winterset*. He naïvely hopes for a vindication of his father, judicially murdered. Being less worldly than Rudolph, his intelligence does not militate against his

holding the pose he has taken up. Indeed, he differs from Anderson's Queen Mary only by altering his attitude at the end of the play. There his special vitality is betrayed by another kind—human love. He dies to save his sweetheart, as well as to vindicate his father.

Yet human love is the implement that corrects and instructs the one other character to be considered here: King in *Key Largo*. King demonstrates the remaining possibility: a character that relinquishes his pose (in this case, faithfulness to the cause of Loyalist Spain and, more generally, to the cause of enduring justice). He thinks he is being prudent and is made to resume his pose by a girl who will love him only as the cherisher of an ideal.

It must be pointed out that none of these three variations alters the isolation of the tragic figure. Even human love (with the exception of the half-betrayal it effects in *Winterset*) enforces on the heroes the necessity of sustaining the pose or taking it up again.⁴ Love does not end isolation, it faces the heroes toward what looks like moral choice but isn't. True, to a careless eye, King's sweetheart, in *Key Largo*, seems to point out for him alternate courses of action with human consequences. But a closer study shows that King really makes his choice between resumption of the pose (which means instant death) and complete compromise with the abrasive forces that, during the play, King has temporized with.

One should note, in all these assumptions and resumptions of poses, Anderson's hostility to reason. If the heroes followed "reason," they would behave as

⁴ Nathaniel McQuestion's behavior in *The Wingless Victory* antedates King's. But it is overshadowed by the flawless resolution of Oparre, his Polyneesian wife.

King does in the Prologue to *Key Largo*. There King knows the Loyalist cause is lost, and he turns his back on his comrades, leaving them to hold an impossible strategic point of battle. By following reason he becomes a crass "realist." His reward is that he is repudiated by his friends, by his sweetheart, and finally by himself. His triumph comes when he transcends reason and its powers (but not traditional values).⁵ He points his gun at the Florida gangster and asks him to do his worst. He follows the urgencies of nonanimal vitality; he goes against all the rational dictates of prudence and self-interest.

Finally, something assesses the value of holding a pose, if not the mind, then an emotional response to the hero's nonanimal vitality. This judgment varies, according to the dissimilar networks of events in the various plays. One is tempted to see a change that is a progression. At any rate, there is a determination to break out of the cul-de-sac. For Anderson's exploration of it is motivated by a nonanimal faith—a faith that somewhere there exists vistas which afford the dramatist, his characters, and his audiences the contemplation of fixed values—values which all superior men might see alike.

One can see in Anderson a growing certainty of this or (the cynical would suggest) a growing desire for certainty. The old rabbi, Esdras, in *Winterset*, admires Mio's immolation only because it is in contradiction to a universe that, the rabbi is sure, lacks direction. But Rudolph of Hapsburg does more than admire the suicidal courage of his mistress,

⁵ To Anderson, reason is that which rationalizes, which conceals from us the baseness of our predetermined natures. Reason did not contribute to the formation of traditional values. Those arose, like the attitudes of his heroes, as sports in a deterministic universe and receive the same reception.

who at least wins to what may be called an individual absolute—to be a perfect statue in a lonely forest. He quickly imitates it.

Finally, King's sweetheart says, when she knows of his failure:

We're all less for it, the whole world's less because

of what you are! A woman can hesitate forever—but a man must be sometime bright and clear, like a plowshare in the sun or a mountain above the cloud!

Later, D'Alcala, the girl's father, tries to aid her in persuading King to resume his pose. He concedes that the realist is correct in regarding the universe as meaningless; then he adds:

... yet to take this dust
and water and our range of appetites
and build them toward some vision of a god
of beauty and unselfishness and truth—
could we ask better of the mud we are
than to accept the challenge, and look up
and search for god-head?

Absolutes exist or can be made to exist outside the human mind, somewhere in the universe; but only the resolute in pose see them and can be judged by them. The mass of humanity breathes, eats, and dies, indifferent to these values. The imagination of humanity is untouched by what King and the other characters come to see. The seeing is contrary to all the motions of purely animal vitality; it depends upon a miraculous change in the characters' state of being.

III

Surveying Anderson's tragedy at a certain point (*ca.* 1938), one would have been inclined to say that the dramatist had exhausted the potentialities of the tragic formula he was investigating. Judgment might have run that he had shown fully what a resolute person can come to in a world where all is chance—chance that, somewhat arbitrarily, gravi-

tates toward that which is mean. "Sad if true" would have been the proper estimate of this gallery of aristocratic souls—a gallery that carries no meaning for the mass of mankind. Yet, one must recall, this is the same mass that was attracted by the mechanism of redemption-exerted attraction.

But events, as much as the inconsistencies implicit in his own theories of human nature, have recently moved Anderson to something more vigorous than the attentive exploration of his alley. In a tiny melodrama, *Second Overture* (1938), Anderson presents a bitter picture of a Russian commissar who inflicts on refugees the injustice he suffered in 1906. Reproached by an old comrade, the commissar denies the existence of absolute justice. This denial stirs the old comrade to prefer death to the mercy of this relativist. There must be, insists the doomed man, a justice higher than bourgeois or proletarian whim. Although the substance of the play reiterates D'Alcala's hope in *Key Largo*, one is tempted to suggest that the title, *Second Overture*, is relevant to Anderson's career—that the play is a prelude to a restatement of man's destiny. Anderson's latest play, *Journey to Jerusalem*, affirm the guess.

In the dramatist's introduction to this play, among many interesting passages which express horror at the role of force in modern history and, obliquely, criticisms of Anderson's former theories of man's nature, the following sentences occur:

We have pinned our hopes on civilization and progress by material change; we have put aside the ancient wisdom of the race as expressed by the prophets and poets, and have thought, when we did not go so far as to say it, that there is necessity for a morality based in religion. When a man has admitted that, he is Hitler's meat. . . .

If we are to oppose Hitler we must believe in ourselves, as individuals and as a nation. And if we are to believe in ourselves we must—and there is no way out of it—believe that there is purpose and pattern in the universe, that man can contribute to this purpose and that every individual man has a sacred right to follow his own intuition toward that purpose in so far as his actions are compatible with the liberty and happiness of his neighbors.

It is as if historical events, the product of man's belief that only matter is real and that force alone can triumph, have shocked Anderson's own nonanimal vitality into vigorous action; they make him drop the stiffly held pose which he shared with his characters. And his protest, in the final analysis, is directed not against the dictators but toward the ideas that have made their existence possible. In Anderson's own case the conception to be attacked in *Journey to Jerusalem* is that virtue (the pose) is destined to have no effect, that inertia and disintegration will win the temporal victory over it.

Wishing to deny this, Anderson has looked into the past to find out examples of virtue putting its seal on history, that expressed itself not in aristocratic drawing-aside from life but in a resolute plunge forward, in action. In this newly motivated search he does not stop halfway as do other dramatists with backgrounds similar to his.⁶ He turns to the Christian story itself. In his more light-hearted years he might have called it the Christian "legend." Then it seems safe to record complacently the defeat of the best human values by a deterministic universe. But now the mind of the dramatist—perhaps he would say his instinct to sustain that which he regards as

⁶ E.g., Robert E. Sherwood's use of Lincoln in *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* and S. N. Behrman's use of the unhappy poetess in *The Talley Method*.

most human, that which mind and reason often enough have seemed to betray—demands that he present a picture of ideas in triumphant action. Whether the result happens to be tragic drama seems, in the pressure of the moment, a secondary issue.

In the play Anderson fixes attention on the visit of the twelve-year-old Jesus to the temple; the dramatist tries to give a "natural" history of how the idea of being a savior to mankind arose in Jesus. To implement this, Anderson invents—justly—the character of Ishmael, a fierce zealot and an eater of locusts and honey. These two, Ishmael and Jeshua (Jesus), present a convincing account of the matter, *humanly considered*.

One cannot, of course, indicate whether this play has the result the dramatist hoped for—to arouse his audience to a belief that (contrary to all the dramatist has said before) an idea—a prose if you will—can become operative and, like Jesus, pass from the individual and leaven the slothful mass of mankind. But one can state that Anderson has hammered a way out of his cul-de-sac. He has done it more as a member of an imperiled civilization than as a dramatist painstakingly exhibiting all the facets of a point of view.

Further, he has done this not in the character of Jeshua but in that of Ishmael, the zealot instructor of the young boy. True, we see in Jeshua what can be seen nowhere else in Anderson, the *birth* of a pose, the process which Anderson takes for granted in his other plays. But one must note that there is, in the child, chiefly wonder and submission to the destiny he hears of. Even here, however, there is the suggestion that the boy, as Christ, will do more than endure—that in achieving his destiny he

will act and move for good those he encounters.

But it is in Ishmael that there is displayed Anderson's closest approach to free will, to what he wanted particularly to present in this play—idea finding expression in action. Ishmael believes in the message he has to convey to Jeshua. He is reckless of his safety, even of his own integrity (that possession Rudolph von Hapsburg nurses so carefully). Further, in revealing to Jeshua his future, Ishmael achieves a death that is clearly a consequence of the act of revealing his knowledge, not of holding the pose of merely continuing to believe what he happens to believe. He makes his belief operative—something that is really accomplished nowhere else in Anderson's drama.

Too much should not be adduced from this one figure who asserts the existence and power of absolutes, of power that does not short-circuit in an isolated imagination but that leaps across the void that separates one man from another. It is sufficient to note that Anderson appears to recognize the real operation of choice instead of the mysterious emergence of a pose. In Ishmael's fall there is more than endurance; his death results from a dynamic play of consequences as well as from a static state of being.

By pointing out this contrast I do not mean that Anderson has made a shift from one frame of interpretation to another. The process of change is slow. It is not likely that the dramatist will find it easy to dispense with a frame of interpretation that has served him well for ten years. Perhaps the contrast represents only the dramatist's reaction to the special case treated in *Journey to Jerusalem*.

Indeed, there is much against a perma-

nent change. The change would involve not just an alteration in dramaturgy; it would involve a change in many of the conceptions deeply fixed in the thinking of Anderson and his contemporaries—conceptions about man's nature, of which *Journey to Jerusalem* may contain a harried abjuration rather than a final recantation.

Such a change, when complete, has many results. It demands the substitution of humility for aristocratic preconceptions. And humility reveals to each man that in his own heart there is a close mixture of beast and god. It counsels patience with the workings of the mind, not contempt, for the mind is to be trusted within limits. It reveals a will whose ef-

fects unroll, not solitary but in a rich human context.

This humility has a special revelation for creative artists. It shows them that the end of any human life cannot be confidently foretold from the status of that life at a given moment. Consequently, the complete course of any life, eminent or obscure, must be for him who contemplates it a new source of pleasure and sorrow rather than a confirmation of what he has always known about mankind in general. Each new character to be developed requires of the dramatist a unique demonstration, for he is to display the processes of choice and redemption at work, unpredictable now as in any previous age.

THE CANTING LANGUAGE: SOME NOTES ON OLD UNDERWORLD SLANG

H. T. WEBSTER¹

In its three centuries or so of existence England's antique underworld jargon, called the "canting language," produced no single bard of the stature of Villon. Numerous canting songs survive from the seventeenth century, but these are almost uniformly without literary merit. W. E. Henley's translation from Villon, *Villon's Straight Tip to All Cross Coves*, gives one a better idea of what a Robert Greene or a Thomas Dekker might have accomplished with this old slang than anything actually left by these worthies. But, if no colorful figure like Villon emerges from the more sinister shadows of a past populated with the ghosts of footpad, harlot, and sturdy beggar, at any rate the canting language has a dif-

fused literary existence for the modern reader in the pages of Jonson, Fletcher, Shadwell, Defoe, Gay, Fielding, Scott, Byron, Dickens and a host of lesser figures; while the coney-catching pamphlets of Greene and Dekker have been reprinted in several recent anthologies.

The canting language was in no sense general slang. Some cant words eventually came into general usage, where they remain today; but the language characteristically existed as the secret speech of an organized underworld. Originally it was the special property of the elaborate hierarchy of beggars, who appeared in the fifteenth century when feudal society was in a state of advanced decay. The beggars roamed the English countryside in summer and hibernated in London

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in the winter, where they constituted about the nearest thing to a large-scale gang that pre-Restoration England could show. The French "jargon" of Villon's time was developed by the same class of society and to serve the same purpose that the English canting language did; and the analogy between the "Cour des Miracles" of Paris and the "Mint" and similarly privileged districts in London is perfect. Both of them were the cradles of a special linguistic phenomenon that had a considerable influence on later popular speech.

Samuel Rowlands, the author of one of the earliest pamphlets exposing London low life,¹⁸ attributed the invention of English canting to a single man, Cock Lorrell, who was supposed to be king of the beggars from 1501 to 1533.¹⁹ This assertion cannot be entirely discounted even though it is not corroborated by other evidence. If it is true, it would suggest that English canting was deliberately invented sixty years after French jargon was current enough for Villon to write in it and forty to fifty years before the earliest commentary on English slang.²⁰ Of course, as it was used, a process of change and development set in which eventually caused it to lose most of its identity.

A canting song from Dekker's *Lan-thorne and Candlelight* (1612) serves to provide the reader with one of the early examples of the beggars' language:

The ruffian cly the nab of the Harmon beck,
If we mawnd Pannam, lap or Ruff-Pecke
Or poplars of Yarum; he cuts bing to the Ruff-
mans

¹⁸ Martin Mark-All, *Beadle of Bridewell* (1610).

¹⁹ For over three centuries the beggars really chose kings. One of them, Bamphylde-Moore Carew, who died in 1759, was the hero of three biographies and a considerable body of anecdotes.

²⁰ Thomas Harman, *A Caveat or Warning against Common Cursitors* (1566).

Or else he swears by the lightmans
To put our stamps in the Harmans
The Ruffian cly the ghost of the Harman beck,

If we heave a booth, we cly the jarkel
If we niggle, or mill a bowzing ken,
Or nip a boung that has but a win,
Or dup the giger of a gentry cofe's ken
To the quier cuffing we bing, and then
To the quier ken to scour the cramp-ring
And then to the trindle on the chates in the
lightman's
The Bube and the Ruffian cly the Harmon's
beck, and harmans.⁴

These lines have the usual limitations of the short example, and it is impossible to confine all ensuing comments to the vocabulary represented in them. Nevertheless, as a starting-point, they do illustrate a number of the general characteristics of the canting lexicons which belonged to Dekker's time and later. Obviously, such volumes were sure to be inconsistent both in spelling and in definition, for to the difficulties of catching in print any fluid speech such as slang were added the vagaries of the Elizabethan printer. The word "harman," for example, is used in three separate senses in the song, with the one variation in spelling which is phonetically meaningless. Evidently it originally meant a "magistrate." In this case the stocks would be called "harmans" by an obvious process of association, and the constable would be the har-

⁴ "The devil take the neck of the constable,
If we beg bread, drink or bacon
Or porridge; he goes straight to the magistrate
Or else he swears by the daylight
To put our legs in the stocks
The devil take the ghost of the constable,

"If we rob a booth, we catch the whip!
If we cheat, or rob an ale house
Or cut a purse that has but a penny,
Or open the door of a gentleman's house
To the magistrate we go quickly, and then
To prison to wear shackles
And then to the noose on the gallows in the
daylight
The pox and the devil take the constable and
magistrate."

man's "beck" or "beak," as Dickens spelled it in *Oliver Twist*.

The song thus illustrates the occasional inconsistencies of the lexicons. It also provides examples of several classes of words that occur in all of them. Immediately apparent among these are ordinary English words to which unusual and special meanings have been attached: "ruffian" for "devil," "queer" for "bad," "cuts" for "goes," etc. These, together with such dialectical expressions as "dup" for "lift" or "open," "nab" for "nape" or "neck," and "cly" or "nim" for "take" naturally make up a large part of the canting vocabulary. Secondly, there are borrowings from international dog Latin and other foreign sources. The etymologies of such words are often obvious. "Pannam" for "bread," in the song, immediately betrays its Latin origin, while other analogous words common to all the lexicons are "grannum" for "grain," "cassam" for "cheese," and "patrico" for "priest." The spelling of "mawned" in the song indicates its origin in the French word *mendier*, "to beg." Other common French borrowings are *ville* for "city," "file" for "go off quickly" (from *filer*), "perry" for "fearful" (from *peur*), and corruptions of the French numerals such as "tres" for *trois* or "sice" for *six*. Dutch *buizen*, "to drink deeply," and Romany *tan* for "place" give etymological explanation to the phrase "bowzing ken" in the song and complete the illustration of the principal foreign sources used by the beggars. Finally, a number of expressions are simple coinings: "Giger" for "lock" (now "jigger," meaning "gadget"), "bing" for "go fast," "ruffmans" for "magistrate, and "lightmans" for "daylight."

Many of the coined words in the canting vocabulary are produced by a grotesque sort of metathesis in which an

original noun is replaced by a word suggested by one of its attributes. Thus a dog became a "boufa" (equivalent to modern "bow-wow"); a chicken, a "cackling cheat," a staff, a "filchmans" (the Anglers, one class in the beggars' hierarchy, carried hooked staffs with which they filched light objects from open stalls and windows); drink, "lap"; daylight, the "lightmans"; gold, "mynt"; a horse, a "prancer"; legs, "stamps"; a highwayman, a "padder" (a "pad" was a highway); a duck, a "quacking cheat"; a garden, a "smelling cheat"; and butter, "spreader."

It will be observed that the words "cheat" and "mans" recur very frequently in the compound expressions. "Cheat" or "chate" might be translated as meaning a "thing, anything." Thus a "bleating cheat" was a "thing that bleated," i.e., a sheep; "crashing cheats" were "things that crashed"—teeth, in fact, though the meaning here is somewhat strained. But in the later seventeenth century the word "cheat" in its plural form came to refer more exclusively to the gallows, which had been known as the "trinning cheat"; and, if other employment of the word was comprehensible at all, it was no doubt regarded as quaint and archaic. "Mans," the other puzzling monosyllable, seems to have been added to certain words too easily intelligible in themselves, with the deliberate intent of mystifying the uninitiated. Thus, the green fields became "greenmans"; Cheapside market, "Chepemens"; the daylight, "lightmans"; Newgate market, "Numans"; and a hedge, a "crackmans."

In Dekker's canting song, the reader may find the word "quier" or "queer" in several adjectival constructions: "queer cove" or "queer ken," by way of example. "Queer" may be interpreted

simply as "bad"; thus "queer bowse" or "booze," in more modern orthography, was "bad liquor"; "queer loure" was "bad money"; and the "queer cove" was the "magistrate." However, in the early days of the eighteenth century a distinct change in the meaning of "queer" also occurred. It came to be applied chiefly to bad money,⁵ a sense in which it is still used; and a "queer cull," no longer a term of derogation, meant a "counterfeiter" or "distributor of counterfeit money." For its antonym in seventeenth-century slang, "queer" had "rome" (later spelled "rum"), which meant "good." Thus "rome-ville" was London, a "good city," and a "rome cove" was a "right guy" in modern lingo. In the late eighteenth century, however, by an obvious association of ideas, "rum" came to mean "droll," or "amusing," rather than "good"; and so we find in Dickens "that's rum" or "a rum start" in the sense of "good joke."

The natural evolution of speech was greatly accelerated at the close of the seventeenth century, as far as the canting language was concerned.⁶ There were at least two reasons why many changes should occur at this time. The first of these was the general simplification of the whole English idiom. The jawbreaking Elizabethan neologisms generally disappeared; speech was becoming less stately and imaginative, more forceful and direct. And so, in harmony with the current speech tendency, "Whittington" or "Whittington's Palace," Martin Mark-All's term for Newgate prison, be-

came simply "Whit";⁷ "commission," for "shirt," became "mish";⁸ a "togemans" became "tog";⁹ "darkmans" for "night" was slurred to "darmans";¹⁰ and the seventeenth-century expression "trinny cheat" for "gallows" was modified to "cheats" (or sometimes "nubbing tree," in which case a new word was added).

The eighteenth-century outlaw abandoned the old indefinite use of "cheat," but he retained or invented several other monosyllables. "Lay" was the commonest of these, though one sometimes encounters "rig," "sneak," and "budge," used in similar constructions. "Lay" is another spelling of the beggars' word "law," which in the early seventeenth century had meant a method of swindling or robbery. The other three words were evidently new coinings. All these expressions seem to have been used in the eighteenth century to describe occupations rather than things. Thus shoplifting was called the "shopsneak," or still more reconditely the "sneaking budge"; thieving from coaches was known as the "rattling lay," highway robbery was described as the "snaffling lay," and the three-shell or thimble game familiar to our grandfathers was called "thimble rigging." And "sneak" and "budge," by the way, referred, respectively, to robberies of stealth and robberies involving running, which with true British understatement was called "budging."

About the middle of the seventeenth

⁵ See Charles Hitching, *The Regulator* (1718).

⁶ Shadwell's play *The Squire of Alsatia* and the lexicons accompanying *The Compleat English Rogue* catch the language in its transition stage, while works like Charles Hitching's *The Regulator* and Captain Grose's *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* show what it became later.

⁷ See *The Regulator*.

⁸ See *English Rogue*, I, v, where both are given, and *The Regulator* where "mish" alone appears.

⁹ See Harman and Dekker as opposed to *The Regulator*.

¹⁰ See *English Rogue*, I, v, and *The Regulator*; cf. also *Life of Bamphylde-Moore Carew* (1779) and Captain Grose.

century the old beggars' cant began to be amplified to serve the needs of more formidable ruffians, who then appeared on the highroads and city streets; and in the early eighteenth century this tendency became quite marked. A number of new words were added to the canting vocabulary, while some old ones fell into disuse. The beggar did not use pistols in his profession, but the highwayman did, and he called them "pops" (later "barkers" or "barking sticks").¹¹ The footpad and highwayman had a professional interest in pickpockets, which they styled "readers."¹² The pickpocket stole silk pocket handkerchiefs, watches, and snuff-boxes, which articles he variously described as "wipes," "loges" (also "tickers"), and "lobs" (later "sneeze boxes").¹³ His profession had replaced the obsolete art of cutting purses from people's sides, and a phrase was coined to fit it—the "filing lay" (probably from "file," to "go off quickly," in the seventeenth century).¹⁴ In the time of Charles II it became fashionable for gentlemen to wear periwigs. These were called "polls" or "katlings" in the canting language, and snatching them from the gentlemen's heads was known as the "katling lay."¹⁵ The word "flash" was invented to mean "demi-mondaine."¹⁶

Some seventeenth-century words, by a natural association of ideas, took entirely new meanings. Thus "prig," a verb first meaning "to ride," became a noun signifying "thief" in later times.¹⁷ The highwayman was probably the con-

necting link here. "Darkman," used in the seventeenth century for the nighttime, was sometimes employed by eighteenth-century thieves to designate the watchman.¹⁸ "Lagge" for water became "lagged," "transported or sent over the water";¹⁹ and many similar changes occurred. Yet, varied and interesting as were the mutations of the canting language, the dialect remained substantially the same. A man well grounded in the "Peddler's French" of Shakespeare's time could still make himself understood in the flash talk of Fielding. Incidentally, the beggars themselves, who retained their monarchical existence for a long time, were a powerful, conservative influence on the language, if we may judge from the samples of their speech given in Scott's *Guy Mannering*.

Some words of the old underworld slang survive today in reputable and disreputable usage. "Fence," the beggar's term for a receiver of stolen goods, is now standard English. "Duds," originally a cant term from Scotch dialect for the linen which the beggars filched from the cottage clotheslines, has a wide colloquial usage today as applied to clothes of all sorts. "Bowse," or "booze," for "liquor," remains in common use, and "tip," meaning "give," survives chiefly as a noun. "Hic," signifying "booby" originally, is now spelled "hick," but it remains in use. "Peter," for "portmanteau," is applied by the modern criminal to a safe, and a "peterman" is a "safe-blower." "Tie," meaning in the language of the eighteenth-century thief, "to trust," survives in the phrase "you can tie to him." That part of the anatomy which Smollett referred to with a deli-

¹¹ See *The Regulator* and Captain Grose.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Eric Partridge, editor of Grose (Oxford, 1931), associates it with *filou*, a French word for "pick-pocket." Perhaps both are from *filer* originally.

¹⁵ See *The Regulator* and Grose.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ See *English Rogue*, I, v, and *The Regulator*.

¹⁸ See *English Rogue*, I, v, and Defoe's *Street Robberies Consider'd*.

¹⁹ See *English Rogue*, I, v, and Grose; also *Oliver Twist*, chap. xliii.

cacy not always characteristic of him as the "posterior" is still inelegantly called the "prat." These are some of the sea changes effected by the last two centuries; and today it is a far cry to the time when Defoe wrote:

Whenever any person hears such language, speech, or cant; or what you please to call it, let them take care of the speaker; for they may depend on't they are certainly of the nimming clan, and therefore to be avoided."²⁰

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ENGLISH IN WARTIME: A SUGGESTION AND AN ILLUSTRATION

WILLIAM R. PARKER¹

Like countless other teachers of English, I have given much thought lately to the problem of undergraduate reading in a time of war. I have read, I must confess, with considerable disappointment the discussion on this subject sponsored by *College English*. Professor Hanford is quite right in objecting that the Indianapolis resolution was framed "by persons of more than ordinary detachment" and that it does not, therefore, represent the full conviction of all of us. I for one cannot confidently assume that an all-out war effort means all-out for everyone except teachers of English.

²⁰ Daniel Defoe, *A Caveat for Shopkeepers*.

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We have a job to do. In order to do it well we must remember our essential business, which is with literature and not with current propaganda that may or may not some day (for reasons apart from propaganda) become literature. Our business also is with the human mind, the mind which very soon now, alarmingly soon, will be behind the gun or behind the machine protecting us, the molders of that mind, from utter destruction. Our business is to help that mind to understand the essential issues of war and peace, to sharpen it, to clear it, to lift it above prejudice and pettiness, to provide it with refreshment for moments of stress.

We all, I think, recognize these ideals; the problem is how best to realize them. We want to stick to our essential business without, at the same time, appearing anachronistic. We want to prove ourselves equal to the crisis of the hour without becoming servants of the hour. We feel ourselves, and at our best we are, custodians of the wisdom of the ages. At some cost, too, we have trained ourselves to be skeptical and tolerant and objective. Shall we now abandon our heritage and, because our nation is again at war, encourage chauvinism and uncritical thinking? What can the teacher of English do?

Whatever we do, let us not substitute propaganda for literature, consciously or unconsciously. Let us not turn political scientists or sociologists or historians. Now is the time for us to reassert the timeless and universal qualities of great writing. Now is the time for us to prove those healing and enlightening and uplifting powers of the masterpiece which, in quiet days, we tend to forget. With this high purpose in mind, let us, I suggest, thoughtfully reconsider the literature of the past with a view to the needs of the present.

Whether we like it or not, in a time of war we teachers of English become, automatically, guardians of civilian morale. We cannot escape this grave responsibility; we ignore it at our peril and to our shame. But I am suggesting here that if we merely continue to teach those books which satisfied the mind in days of peace, and do not now show their value and relevance for minds absorbed by war, we are not only shirking our duty as citizens but also shirking our great opportunity as teachers. If we muffle this opportunity, we deserve the worst that can befall us, for we shall prove ourselves incompetent as well as unpatriotic.

I am not suggesting that we immediately turn our curriculum topsy-turvy. I am suggesting that we reconsider the literary materials with which we legitimately and permanently deal, and at least shift emphases, or make fresh interpretations, with the vital concerns of our students in mind. The time to do this is now, not tomorrow. Within a month after Pearl Harbor I felt it necessary to make a complete revision of my course in seventeenth-century prose and poetry, and the undergraduate response was proof that I had anticipated a genuine need. The revision, let me add, was one of point of view, not of subject matter. Every century of English and American literature has light to throw upon the human problems involved in the current crisis; and if we once acknowledge that great books are great for the light they throw upon the living as well as upon the dead, we can make every course in our present curriculum vital and pertinent.

Let me add a further confession. I have been lately re-reading a good deal of English poetry with the college freshman in mind. (If it be charged that my motives were not entirely pedagogical, I shall not deny it.) Most reluctantly I have come to the conclusion that many poems which yesterday brought delight are today offensive in their triviality or irritating in their irrelevance. If one teacher, however benighted, feels that way about them, how must many students feel? I am not ashamed to admit that I have been disturbed by the faces of some of my more intelligent undergraduates when I have been explaining the verbal joys afforded by birds and flowers or the rhetorical sadness buried word-deep in Petrarchian love. I am not ashamed because, rightly or wrongly, I feel that my obligation to living readers

is greater than my obligation to dead authors. Teaching poetry to freshmen has always been a problem. We must be doubly careful now in making our selections.

Let us, I repeat, quickly and thoughtfully reconsider the literature of the past. Is not this the time to stress those books which deal illuminatingly with conflicting ideologies relating to war and peace? Should we not emphasize, now, all honest and searching interpretations of critical moments in human experience, all informing analyses of the causes of crisis, all ageless solutions to immediate conflicts? Our students need, today as never before, contact with the most eloquent and inspiring confessions of faith in the dignity and worth of the human spirit. They need to have their minds fortified for war and, even more important, clarified for the problems of the peace which must eventually come. A number of such masterpieces spring at once to mind. The general public has recently rediscovered Tolstoy's *War and Peace* without the teacher's help. Perhaps we can remind readers of Hardy's *The Dynasts*, an equally brilliant analysis of crisis. More's *Utopia* is once again amazingly relevant, and so, in a different way, is Machiavelli's *Prince*. There are poems numberless.

But my purpose here is not to outline a course in "Literature and Crisis," but rather to make a suggestion and to offer one specific illustration. For illustration of the new relevance of great books I choose a modern novel which I read after its publication, more than a dozen years ago, and did not read again until recently. To other teachers who have not read Arnold Zweig's *The Case of Sergeant Grischa* since the outbreak of war I recommend the experience as, to say the least, illuminating. I remembered Ser-

geant *Grischa* as a realistic and disillusioned picture of the horrors of war—as a book, therefore, not to be put into the hands of those whose business, tomorrow, might be fighting. I was only half right. Realistic and disillusioned it is, but it is also a book which, intelligently interpreted, makes overwhelmingly clear one of the few causes for which civilized people must be ready to shed blood. It is a book which makes one hate war, but makes one hate an ideology even more. Hence, it is a novel which we teachers, without too much inconsistency, can put into the hands of those whom we have encouraged in either pacifism or cynicism.

Grischa is a poor, illiterate, and lousy Russian soldier. He is fully drawn to the life, but the important thing about him is not that he is Grischa and no one else, but rather that he is an individual—any individual—victimized by a system which regards the rights of the individual as unimportant. Grischa is, in other words, anyone, Russian or German or French, educated or illiterate, old or young, man or woman, soldier or civilian—anyone engulfed by the political philosophy which we have since come to know by the name of "Nazi." Grischa is a symbol of the people of Belgium, of Holland, of Norway, of Czechoslovakia. Grischa is what we in America will become if we fail, now, in our struggle against our enemies.

The novel makes the basic issues of our world war brilliantly clear. There is no question of "democracy," or "the American way of life," or preserving the British Empire, or encouraging communism or atheism. There is no problem of making the world "safe" for any political theory. The essential question is simpler and more fundamental. *The Case of Sergeant Grischa* poses a question to which Russians, Chinese, British, and Ameri-

cans can and must give the same unqualified answer, an answer on which the United Nations can truly unite, apart from the necessities of military expediency. It comes to this: Does government exist for the people or the people for government? Does justice exist apart from the will of the state?

Anyone who has read *Sergeant Grischa* since Hitler came into power is certain to have been amazed by the prophetic quality of Zweig's novel. The book was conceived in 1917 and written as a play in 1921. Later, in 1927, when Zweig elaborated his theme in novel form, it was an immediate sensation. Translated by Eric Sutton, it was published in America in 1928 and at once had several reprintings. Critics were lavish in their praise, but in those pre-Hitler years they were less concerned with the fundamental problem raised by the book than with its representation of "the irony and pathos of human fate." Today we can see that the author's forebodings of 1917 have become the facts of 1942.

One of the principal characters in the novel is the embodiment of Nazi ideology and almost a prophetic portrait of Hitler himself. Major General Albert Schieffenzahn not only resembled the Führer in appearance (even to mustache and "husky, high-pitched voice"); "he was perfectly clear that the Germans were only beginning to play their part in history; to his mind they were the nation chosen to rule, create, and fortify the breed of men."

He had the constructive imagination of the artist in planning and carrying out great works. His creative will was embodied and made manifest in that land. . . . He had never spent a single hour in the west or in the south; he therefore saw the people of those countries in the light of his reading, which was chosen, though quite unconsciously, to gratify his prejudices. . . . In his work nothing troubled him so little

as the wishes, views, and traditions of the population. . . . He looked on them as not yet of age, and in need of guidance, like the rank and file of the army, into whom he hammered his aims, his thoughts, and his political views, by means of his system of "patriotic instruction." It was for him to command; and his was the responsibility. . . . He hated opposition, independence of mind, laziness, the vast incompetence of human creatures; and remorselessly he hated disorder, sedition, the Western chatter about democracy, and the detestable Nihilistic revolution in the East.

This is but part of Zweig's anticipation of history. Hitler-Schieffenzahn also has a passion and a genius for putting his finger into all the details of military and civil organization; he knows the poisonous uses of propaganda; he works with and through an elaborate spy system. In a moment of candor he expresses his philosophy thus: "The art of war, looked at from the technical point of view, seems to be intended to put God in His proper place. . . . The State creates justice, the individual is a louse." Might makes right, and "Little peoples can have but little freedom." World dominion was his aim.

Another character in the novel explains:

Now the real concern is politics. The fight for the Class State and the rule of the few over the many. The militarized nation is, say they, the true expression of the modern nation. Seventy millions at the will and pleasure of three thousand irresponsible masters. Today they've got hold of the women, and tomorrow they'll do what they like with the schools. . . . And what will be the end of it, no one knows.

Grischa, the individual, without understanding any of the issues involved, becomes a victim of this political philosophy. His "case," because it could so easily be the case of any individual, becomes the absorbing concern of other characters in the story, who do their best to save him. Most of these other charac-

ters are Germans, but because they keep the issues clear, their point of view is the point of view of all thinking people everywhere who today have combined forces against the Nazi idea.

For example, there is the old Prussian general, von Lychow, who exclaims: "The State creates justice, does it? No, Sir, it is justice that preserves the State. . . . It is because justice is the foundation of all States, that nations have the right to tear themselves to pieces in their defence." To another character, Bertin, the Nazi ideology "meant the end of Germany as a moral entity, as a civilized community." When the state ceases to recognize the rights of the individual, declares Lieutenant Winfried, then God have mercy "on the German nation—who knows what beside." "For the nation that forsakes justice is doomed." Posnanski, the lawyer, exclaims, "Germany as a Power is rising like a batter pudding, Germany as a moral force is shrinking to the thinness of a thread." Finally, this same Posnanski, with his deep love for the Fatherland of Johann Sebastian Bach, gives us an ideal for the peace that must follow our own war:

It must be our next task, I think, to try to make the nations feel that justice hangs over

them in heaven among the stars, just as the individual feels it when he is not maddened or stupefied by the pursuit of money.

In the novel *Grischa* is sacrificed to the Nazi idea, just as, in the past few years, nations of individuals have been sacrificed. The necessities of art and honesty demanded it once; history has demanded it since. But the novel closes on a note of hope for the future of mankind, and the reader may take this, too, as prophetic.

Sergeant Grischa, like so much of great literature, contains a truth made pertinent rather than platitudinous by the passing years. It, and other books like it, are the stuff of experience which we should be putting into the hands of our students today. Written by a German, chiefly about Germans, it reminds us that we are fighting an idea and not a people. A work of art rather than a piece of current propaganda, it clarifies the basic issues of our conflict, helps us more truly to know ourselves and our enemies, and (like all works of art) lifts our spirits for the struggle which, as civilized people, we must win in order to survive. Let us search our memories and our libraries for other books which, like *The Case of Sergeant Grischa*, we can teach without surrendering either integrity or patriotism.

ENGLISH AND THE CLASSICS: A REMINDER

CHESTER LINN SHAVER¹

A generation ago it was taken for granted that the best outside aid to the appreciation of English literature was a knowledge of the Greek and Latin classics. Underlying this assumption was the

belief that no other foreign literature stands so close, genetically, to our own and that comparison of the two might therefore yield a number of instructive correspondences. In practice, to be sure, the comparison sometimes ended in little more than an inventory of parallel char-

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acteristics, as in the assertion that *Paradise Lost* shares with the *Iliad* an apparatus of superhuman beings and complex similes. With emphasis on differences, however, as well as similarities, it generally led to a clearer understanding of English literature, better power to evaluate it, and increased pleasure in reading it.

Now that the classics are being elbowed aside in the educative process, this threefold justification of them as an auxiliary subject matter deserves to be reconsidered by everyone who wishes to enjoy English literature as fully as possible. To that end, what follows may be regarded as a handful of reminders.

I

In the first place, a knowledge of the classical languages is plainly an advantage in reading a literature three-fourths of whose vocabulary derives from Greek and Latin. A direct acquaintance with them enables one to grasp, without resort to a lexicon, the meaning of classical phrases which have no English substitutes, or which are presumably as intelligible as their English counterparts, or which are felt to have more impressive overtones than any copy. *Lacrimae rerum* and *curiosa felicitas* lack precise equivalents in translation. For many, *sine qua non* comes to hand quite as readily as "prime essential." Addison's first *Spectator* seems more eloquent for being sponsored by *quicquid agunt homines*; Bentley's overweening Latinity was never pilloried more savagely than when Swift tucks *cetera desunt* into a supposed gap in the manuscript of *The Battle of the Books*; and titles like *Invictus* and *In utrumque paratus* have about them the stoic resolution of Rome itself.

Allusions to classical proper names are caught easily and amply if one knows their home contexts. "Ciceronian prose"

has a special aura, provided it conjures up an image of the Forum. The initiate knows that Tiffany and Cartier do not trade in Cornelia's jewels. What's Hecuba to him who must steal into Troy through the postern of a Hamlet soliloquy? The face that launched a thousand ships was sorcery long before Marlowe's mighty line.

Then there is that host of Latin borrowings whose sense has changed since the time when the debt was contracted. The "extravagant and erring spirit" in *Hamlet* is not a confirmed spendthrift, nor Donne's "ecstasy" a maudlin transport, nor Herrick's "protestant" a religious nonconformist, nor Gray's "noble rage" a spirited anger or august imbecility.

Knowing Greek and Latin helps too, in the ferreting-out of a happy or an unhappy lapse of a classical immigrant into its primitive English meaning. Dean Briggs somewhere remarks that "Irving's 'assiduity,' of the fisherman who sits long without a bite, draws much of its felicity from etymology." But the stranger to *ad* and *sedere* cannot perceive this any more than he can see what is wrong with "the enormity of the Parthenon."

Familiarity with Greek and Latin, in brief, is a short cut to understanding one aspect of English literature and frequently to enriching that understanding with the associations of another culture. But, since dictionaries offer a kind of makeshift, it is perhaps less important to the whole art of reading than a knowledge of classical literature, which can be learned as a body of facts from histories and encyclopedias but as a work of genius from the texts alone.

II

For a grasp of classical literature the reader of English has three main uses:

He may employ it to appraise the forms of English literature in the light of classical prototypes, to estimate the degree in which an English author has made the thought of a classical author his own, and to assess the influence of the classical temper on the English authors who have written in either conscious or unconscious emulation of it.

A knowledge of the forms of classical literature is sometimes indispensable to understanding the forms of English; sometimes it may contribute to a proper evaluation of them; sometimes it may merely tincture them with pleasurable associations.

Drayton shaped his *England's Heroical Epistles* on Ovid's *Heroides*; the models for Pope's *Epistles* were the *Epistles* of Horace. In neither case does one have to know the characteristics of the original forms in order to comprehend or to pass judgment on the forms of the derivatives; yet being familiar with the capacities of the originals allows one to enjoy the liberties taken with them, precisely as familiarity with a musical theme must come before enjoyment of the variations played upon it. In the first satire of the second book, Horace discusses with a lawyer whether he dares continue writing lampoons. When Pope imitates this dialogue, he does not alter the basic form; he alters only its details, shortening some of the speeches, lengthening others, and above all creating rhetorical pungency by fitting the conversation neatly into couplets. The discovery of this transformation pleases quite as much as the discovery of Pope's meaning—and poetry may please as well as edify.

Knowledge of the forms of classical literature can foster judgment as well as pleasure. When Elizabethan playwrights took over the five-act play from the Romans, they acted with Renaissance

piety but not with uniform critical acumen. In its main architecture *The Comedy of Errors* is a good replica of Plautus' *Menaechmi*; and in laying it out Shakespeare showed that he understood how to apportion a plot into five co-ordinate units. But when he tackled the problem of plot structure in *Antony and Cleopatra* his hand had lost some of its cunning; and it remained for Dryden, after a thorough study of the form of classical drama, to rectify matters in *All for Love*. Only by understanding the structural nature of Roman comedy and tragedy, furthermore, can one be in a position to see why Jonson was usually a better dramatic craftsman, if not a better poet, than Shakespeare; for among Elizabethans Jonson was the noblest Roman of them all.

Familiarity with the form of classical epic is almost imperative if one is trying to measure the structural inadequacies of the heroic play. In his preface to *The Conquest of Granada* Dryden intimates that his aim was to give his drama the contours of the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, as Davenant earlier had attempted in *Gondibert* to give epic the dimensions of a five-act play. The folly of Dryden's enterprise consisted, among other things, in his blindness to the irreducibility of the epic mold. Almanzor struts on stilts but always in a pen so narrow that his posturing looks like a gamecock's. To see just how absurd it is, one needs to recall the vast arena in which Achilles flaunts genuine epic pride and indignation.

There are times, lastly, when not to know the forms of classical literature is not to comprehend the forms of English literature at all. A case in point is the mock heroic. Simply to gather what Dryden's intention is in *MacFlecknoe*, Swift's in *The Battle of the Books*, and

Pope's in *The Rape of the Lock* and the *Dunciad*, one ought to have spent some hours with Homer and Virgil. In each instance the frame of the content is the frame of classical epic, but the content itself is radically different from that of classical epic. The resulting irony is not something incidental to the meaning; it is the meaning. Shadwell never deviates into sense, his coronation is a ludicrous imposture, because the area of his intellect is circumscribed by the ampler epic ether it manifestly cannot encompass. The tussle to retrieve Miss Fermor's purloined tress is ridiculous because it occurs, like Bentley's final paroxysms, on the windy plains of a recollected Troy. Not to discern how the spaciousness connoted by epic form dwindles to laughable meanness a topic having no intrinsic sweep is to miss the point completely.

III

As an instrument of sheer comprehension the use of classical literature to appraise an English author's thought has a clear bearing on poems like Tennyson's *Ulysses* and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. It is a commonplace that the germ of Tennyson's work was not the *Odyssey* but the twenty-sixth canto of Dante's *Inferno*; yet, as the meaning of Dante's lines is dependent on one's knowing the characterization and the circumstances which they broaden, so the significance of Tennyson's can be properly seized only if one reads them against Homer's narrative. Ulysses would be no fit symbol of the spirit adventurous to the end if Homer had not provided an explanation of the symbol—and, when a poem is based on a symbol, ignorance of the symbol may spell misunderstanding of the poem.

Shelley's drama is an even better illustration of the point. Conceivably Ten-

nyson's poem would stand on its own feet if its Homeric references were dropped and the monologue put into the mouth of Leif Ericson, say, or Christopher Columbus. But if *Prometheus Unbound* were treated in the same way, it would fall apart, so organic is the connection there between the symbol and the thing symbolized. It might be said indeed that Shelley took up where Aeschylus left off, adding a rising action, a climax, a falling action, and a conclusion (his play has four acts) to the inciting force supplied by *Prometheus Bound*. To read *Prometheus Unbound*, therefore, without having read *Prometheus Bound* would be like walking into a theater after the first curtain.

Besides helping one to comprehend the thought of an English author, knowledge of classical literature may assist in the evaluation of it. By common consent the primary source of *Venus and Adonis*, both directly and by way of Golding's translation, is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In its theme, in the substance of its characterizations and descriptions, Shakespeare's poem adheres closely to Ovid's; the sensual and sprightly imagination of the Roman breathes again in the lush pomps of the Elizabethan. But Ovid's Adonis, to quote Dowden,

is not, like Shakespeare's Adonis, actively hostile to the advances of Venus. This motive of the English poem is transferred to Adonis from the Hermaphroditus of Ovid's fourth book. . . . For the description of the boar Shakespeare evidently turned to the eighth book in Golding's translation.

Shakespeare's Ovidianism, then, is not slavish but discriminating. Out of the stuff of the *Metamorphoses* he wove a new fabric: the threads are the same, but they have a different texture; and this texture is the sign of his poetic originality and a means of rating his workmanship at its full value.

As an aid to mere appreciation, to the hearing of gratifying overtones in the content of English literature, a knowledge of the classics has few if any rivals. Sometimes these grace notes are huddled and fugitive, as in the final chorus of Shelley's *Hellas*:

A loftier Argo cleaves the main
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

Oh, write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll must be!
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free;
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Sometimes the echoes mingle in a great tonal ground swell, as in Browning's *Aristophanes' Apology*, where the symphony that is Attic drama reverberates in line after line of Balaustion's argument. To understand Shelley's verses and Browning's, one perhaps does not have to have read Greek literature, for the allusions in each are virtually explained in context, especially the allusions in Browning's. But one's enjoyment will be greater if one's ear is tuned to cadences that evoke agreeable recollection.

IV

The use of classical literature to weigh the effects of the classical temper on an English author is hard to define, first, because the meaning of the phrase is elastic and, second, because what appears to be classical in an English author's temper may be of nonclassical origin. This use is accordingly of meager value unless observable affinities in temper can be brought under acceptable meanings of the phrase.

"The essentially classical element,"

Pater says, "is that quality of order in beauty." This serves well, many will agree, to distinguish what is fundamental in the classical temper; for others it hardly goes far enough. There is moderation in Homer, but there is also a strange fire; there is restraint in Virgil, but there is also a plangent melancholy; there is spiritual equipoise in Sophocles, but there is also an intense yearning for sensuous beauty. Lucretius and Seneca are stoical; Aristophanes and Juvenal are biting; Catullus and Propertius, to say nothing of Plato, are the classical equivalents of romantic. Yet Pater was fairly close to the truth. Above all individual variations stands the classic norm, the sense of proportion, the sober acknowledgment that life and art have predestined boundaries. And this, when one encounters it in English literature, will in most cases be recognized as something not indigenous but transplanted.

The spell cast on English poets by the mood of the *Anthology* has been at times profound. Classical epigram, intended often to be cut into commemorative stone, was of necessity brief. From this compulsory terseness arose its restrained pathos and subdued irony. Herrick caught its feeling again and again in his lyrics. "To the Virgins, To Make Much of Time" has for its spiritual godfather a fragment attributed to Ausonius, himself a translator and imitator of Greek epigram:

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may
Old time is still a-flying:
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.

*Collige, virgo, rosas, dum flos novus, et nova pubes,
Et memor esto ævum sic properare tuum.*

Many of A. E. Housman's stanzas, likewise, repeat the laconic and ironic plainness of the *Anthology*. Their physical scene is English field and hedgerow, but

their emotional setting is a meadow starred with asphodel:

Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honours out,
Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge cup.

And round that early-laurelled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.

It is merely an accident of chronology that the dead athlete whom these lines stoically compliment was not an Olympic contender. Simonides, penning epitaphs on the men who fell at Salamis, might almost have mistaken them for his own.

The sense of life's tragic limitations inherent in the poetry of the *Anthology* and the attendant awareness of its ironies are also ingrained in Sophoclean drama; this, too, has colored the emotional outlook of authors like Milton and Arnold. *Samson Agonistes* (which incidentally further illustrates the use one may have for a knowledge of the forms of classical literature) is steeped in Sophoclean irony, Sophoclean resignation:

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise or blame; nothing but well and fair
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.

His servants He, with new acquit
Of true experience from this great event,
With peace and consolation hath dismissed
And calm of mind, all passion spent.

On Arnold's temperament the influence of Sophocles was even more penetrating, perhaps because it confirmed and symbolized the influence exerted on him by Stoics like Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. "Who prop, thou askst, in these dark days my mind?" he queries in

the opening verse of "To a Friend" and concludes the sonnet with this answer:

But be his
My special thanks, whose even-balanced soul
From first youth tested up to extreme old age,
Business could not make dull, nor passion wild;
Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole;
The mellow glory of the Attic stage,
Singer of sweet Colonus, and its child.

In "Empedocles on Etna" the philosopher announces:

In vain our pent wills fret
And would the world subdue.
Limits we did not set
Condition all we do.

Born into life we are, and life must be our mould.

If there are any doubts concerning the source of this mood, the last chorus of *Antigone* will set them at rest:

Wisdom is the supreme part of happiness; and reverence towards the gods must be inviolate. Great words of prideful men are ever punished with great blows, and, in old age, teach the chastened to be wise.

The stoic aspect of the classical temper is, of course, but one half of it, and that the more somber one. Its brighter facet, the epicureanism which takes moderate pleasure as the highest good, has also had a clear reflection in English literature. Herrick's poetry, by and large, is probably the best illustration. His "Ode to Sir Clipsby Crew" has all the equable gaiety of the ode in which Horace invites Maecenas to spend a week end at the Sabine farm:

Here we securely live, and eat
The cream of meat;
And keep eternal fires,
By which we sit, and do divine
As wine
And rage inspires.

*Vile potabis modicis Sabinum
cantharis, Graeca quod ego ipse testa
conditum levi. . . .*

Horatian, too, and therefore undisguisedly epicurean is Herrick's exhortation

"To Live Merrily, and To Trust to Good Verses":

Now is the time for mirth
Nor cheek or tongue be dumb;
For with the flow'ry earth
The golden pomp is come.

*Nunc est bibendum, nunc pede libero
Pulsanda tellus.*

It is evident, then, that the classical temper may become on occasion the temper of an English author. What use one can make of this fact it is not easy to say. Probably in none of the examples cited would awareness of it be essential to either understanding or critical evaluation; but perception of it does add a flavor to one's ultimate appreciation. Poems like Housman's have an atmosphere of their own; but to one who recognizes their affinities with the poems of the *Anthology*, they appear to have a second atmosphere, which envelops the first as space envelops the planets. Consciousness of this extra dimension adds to the pleasure of reading; in discovering it, one enjoys something not openly provided by the author but obtained for one's self from his hints, just as in reading many folk ballads one reconstructs the complete narrative from the pinch of details held out. To enjoy the mood of Herrick's poetry, one reconstructs the tem-

perament which it implies without naming.

These, then, are some of the uses which the general reader may have for a knowledge of the classics. They differ in applicability and value, but all are means to the triune end of comprehension, judgment, and enjoyment. There is another, worth mentioning in conclusion, which perhaps transcends them all. The classics may be not only ancillary to the appreciation of English literature; their spirit may enlarge and emphasize the comment on experience provided by English literature itself. That spirit, in broadest definition, is something more than the classical temper already discussed: it is a respect for man which goes beyond the acknowledgment of his limitations—a conviction, as Terence puts it, that nothing human is alien to the concern of human beings. Not by accident, therefore, do the classics rank as humanities; they are the distilled essence of what is permanent in human life and distinctive of it. That is why many English authors have turned to Homer and Sophocles, Virgil and Horace; that is why a reader of English literature, also turning to them, may find in their attitude toward mankind an emblem of his ultimate reading objective.

READING AS A PROBLEM IN COMPOSITION¹

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Since reading is a primary or supplementary aid in teaching composition, a survey of the problem of reading as a

¹ Adapted from a paper read at the Conference for Teachers of English in Technical Schools at the University of Michigan, July, 1941.

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problem in composition, from the point of view of the composition teacher rather than from that of the reading expert or of the literature teacher, may be not without some value.

This problem—reading and composition—concerns, I think, the purposes of reading and the means by which and the

extent to which these purposes can be attained. What I shall do is, first, list specifically the reasons why composition students may be expected to read; second, regroup these reasons into larger divisions with some additional comment; third, attempt to find answers to the question of why this reading is not being more successfully done; and, finally, discuss briefly the extent to which the department or division of English composition is responsible for a solution of the reading problem.

I

The purposes for which composition students read, or for which we may expect them to read, are as follows:

1. Reading for enjoyment. To break the monotony of assignments in grammar, punctuation, spelling, diction, and writing, students are encouraged and even, paradoxically, required to read for pleasure longer or shorter works of fiction and nonfiction outside class.

2. Reading for understanding—as the phrase is used in Mortimer J. Adler's *How To Read a Book*.

3. Reading to understand word combinations as sentences, paragraphs, and longer units of writing: in other words, reading to understand accurately and completely what the author is saying. Failure in this kind of reading is usually meant when the words "reading problem" are used, and methods to overcome such failure are labeled "remedial reading."

4. Reading for ideas. Since most composition courses include use of a book of readings, its subject matter—democracy, science, education, religion, etc.—helps orient the student in the world in which he lives and encourages him to form and to express opinions on such subjects.

5. Reading for models for types of writing. The required book of readings may have its contents arranged according to the four conventional forms of writing, or according to one or more of their subdivisions, as editorials, definitions, descriptive exposition, letters, familiar essays, and the like.

6. Reading for style, i.e., reading which, on an elementary basis at least, helps the student learn about words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, and the way in which they express ideas

and thoughts, as a guide for forming his own style.

7. Reading for vocabulary, both for expressing one's own ideas and for understanding the ideas of others.

8. Reading for examples of grammar, punctuation, and spelling: that is, encouraging the student to think of these not so much as a matter merely of rules and isolated illustrations in sentence exercises but as means by which writers have expressed their thoughts adequately and correctly; hence a means to be used by students in their own writing.

9. Reading for mechanical devices contributing to clearness and interest—undoubtedly a minor purpose, but of value in reading, for example, business letters and professional reports, in which students are asked to note the use of subheads, italics, boldface and capital letters, numbering of sections, and the like, for the purpose of adding clearness and interest to such writing.

10. Proofreading. This is another minor purpose in reading, but a major one for the careless student—a word-for-word reading of a written paper, especially a typewritten paper, to catch errors made through haste and carelessness.

The foregoing list, admittedly, is not necessarily complete; many of these purposes overlap; and probably no one, least of all students, ever reads with only one of these purposes in mind at a time.

II

These detailed statements of purpose can be rephrased and labeled according to a more or less conventional classification: namely, reading for pleasure, reading for understanding, reading for information, and reading in order to write better.

Reading for pleasure (Purpose No. 1, above) in general concerns leisure or recreational reading or, as we more inelegantly phrase it, outside reading. Shall we admit that, as teachers, we are not very scientific about it? If we were pressed for reasons for asking students in composition courses to read, for their

own pleasure, several books of fiction and nonfiction outside class, we should rationalize and say that such reading provides some relief from the monotony of the regular compositional assignments; that it permits students to read several books they may have wanted to read but have not read for lack of time; that, limited as it is, such reading may be an incentive to some students to do further leisure reading; and that it is not a bad idea to get students to visit the library at least two or three times during the year. There are, of course, the inevitable book reports, the content of which varies with individual instructors' assignments; but the students are—or should be—asked, as they read (when the purpose is recreational reading), to forget about the reports and to read for as much pleasure as they can get. Whether any of the reasons just mentioned for this outside reading are valid, we have no means of knowing. We rarely check on the later leisure reading of these students or inquire to what extent this compositional outside reading was responsible.

A second major purpose of reading is reading for understanding (No. 2, above) in the Adler meaning of the term. It is a special use of the word "understanding," for Mr. Adler phrases this purpose, in contrast to reading for pleasure and reading for information, as "reading to understand more." He explains his meaning by contrasting this kind of reading with reading for information.³ Unfortunately, few of us teachers are prepared to teach this kind of reading, and few, if any, of our freshmen are prepared to receive such teaching. Furthermore, we excuse ourselves, perhaps lamely, by saying that such reading could be done in English

composition courses only to a limited amount (perhaps even that amount should be done); that such reading is "the art of getting a liberal education" (Mr. Adler's subtitle for his book), toward which education English composition is not the whole but only a contributing part; and that, as Professor G. T. Buswell of the University of Chicago Department of Educational Psychology once said:

When the term "reading" is used to indicate more than the developing of an ability to read, with reasonable speed and comprehension, materials within the range of the reader's experience the term tends to become synonymous with the term "education" and ceases to have any usable meaning.

The third major purpose of reading is reading for information (Nos. 3 and 4, above). This purpose we have no doubt been accomplishing, or trying to accomplish, in our teaching, since such reading is a valuable source for the content of students' writing. Its achievement depends—and here is the difficulty, for it is more easily said than done—upon patient and painstaking efforts on the part of both teacher and student. Much of the reading trouble that college students have is probably with this purpose of reading for ideas and for understanding (used here not in the Adler sense) sentences, paragraphs, or longer units of writing. Two groups of students, the educators tell us, are likely to have such difficulties: (1) students of average or superior ability who are intellectually capable of doing such reading but have never learned correct reading methods and (2) students who, for their age and number of years of education, are unable to do average reading and are, in reading comprehension (i.e., understanding what is read) and/or speed of reading, from one to five or more years below the col-

³ For a detailed explanation of this meaning see Mortimer J. Adler, *How To Read a Book* (New York, 1940), pp. 31, 32.

lege level of reading ability. For these two groups the process of learning to read has been called, respectively, "developmental reading" and "remedial reading," and the problem of reading is generally considered by educators as involving either one of these, or both.

For dealing with the problem of developmental reading, college English teachers have the assistance of certain textbooks which, among those prepared to assist in fulfilling one or more of the purposes of reading in a composition course, are designed especially to help students improve in reading, with concrete exercises offered as the basis of attack.⁴ But if there is any especially weak point in our teaching of reading according to the methods indicated by such books as these, it is the same weakness—as the psychologists are fond of telling us—of most of our college English teaching. We assume, theoretically, that all college freshmen are equally well prepared and more or less equally intelligent, that all are capable of fulfilling the requirements of our courses. Practically, we know better. In composition, for example, many colleges have separate classes for the superior and the inferior students, but the middle group, ranging in test percentiles from 20 to 70, is certainly not homogeneous. Literature classes, which certainly are involved in the problem of reading, make no such divisions. Nor would it be possible to carry such divisions very far without getting into great confusion. But it is a problem. A Dartmouth study, begun in 1936, found that of 636 freshmen that year about 23 per cent needed remedial reading; that of this remedial-reading group, according to

fall testing which used the Iowa Test of Silent Reading, 29 per cent were below college freshman level in comprehension and 82 per cent were below that level in rate of reading. Applied to the entire class, these figures mean that, in 1936, 6 per cent of the Dartmouth freshmen were deficient in reading for comprehension and 16 per cent in the rate of reading.⁵ When it is remembered that Dartmouth has a selective system of admissions, we can see how much larger the numbers of deficient readers are in institutions which admit all applicants.

For the less severe cases which remedial reading is designed to aid, perhaps the proper method of attack is that (noticeably absent from most of the college reading texts) used in numerous texts for secondary schools. Based on standard reading tests which test for paragraph meaning, word meaning, sentence meaning, location of information, and paragraph organization, such texts give information and exercises which are designed to remedy specific weaknesses brought out by the test results.

A fourth major purpose of reading, one which might well be considered the most important in a composition course, is reading in order to write better (Purposes 5-10, inclusive, above). This major purpose is based on an assumption which may or may not be true—we like to believe that it is—namely, that the more effectively a student reads the more effectively he writes.⁶ This purpose can-

⁵ Henry A. Imus, John W. M. Rothney, and Robert M. Bear, *An Evaluation of Visual Factors in Reading* (Hanover, N.H., 1938), pp. 90, 99.

⁶ Professors John T. Frederick and Leo L. Ward, in the Introduction to their textbook, *Reading for Writing*, have well phrased this assumption: "We learn to write well by becoming familiar with good writing. Reading and writing are vitally related; the ability to read intelligently and the ability to write well are only two aspects of one whole process of intellectual growth."

⁴ E.g., John T. Frederick and Leo L. Ward, *Reading for Writing* (2d ed.; New York, 1941); Edward A. Tenney, *Intelligent Reading* (New York, 1938); and A. Starbuck and W. R. Raymond, *Inductive English Composition* (New York, 1937).

not in practice be separated from reading for information, but it does stress reading in order to acquire knowledge about word usage and meanings; kinds and lengths of sentences; order of word combinations; grammar, punctuation, and spelling as means to effective writing; organization of paragraphs and longer units of writing; models for different classifications of prose; and the like. Such reading materials serve as illustrations of the theories or rules given in textbooks on composition in the same way, for example, that isolated sentences in handbooks on writing serve as illustrations of the rules of grammar and punctuation. And, assuming a practical application of these theories and illustrations on the part of our students, we should find that as we teach students to achieve effectively this fourth purpose in reading, we are at the same time teaching them to improve in their writing.

III

Now for the obstacles that stand in the way of a successful solution of the college reading problem in so far as the teacher of composition is concerned.

First, there is an already crowded English calendar. With the manifold problems involved in getting or trying to get our students to write correctly and clearly, often according to handbook rules, and with the amount of time allotted to us by the other departments which we serve, it is difficult to see just where additional time and money are to come from to deal with the reading problem. If we assume that only those seriously deficient in reading need attention, and if it is true—as some reports show—that “from 10 to 20 per cent of the members of any entering college class are seriously deficient in reading ability, while many others have marked disability,” we face certain practical difficulties. The reading

experts tell us that, depending upon the nature of the deficiency, any one remedial class should contain from one up to a maximum of five students only. These figures mean that, of a college class of one thousand freshmen, one hundred to two hundred are in great need of remedial reading; hence, from twenty to forty classes in remedial reading, at the minimum, are required, and, if the teaching load remains the same, from four to eight members should be added to the staff. These figures are, for present conditions, somewhat inexact; for other experts say that remedial-reading groups up to fifteen students make satisfactory improvement and that not all such remedial groups need instruction through the entire year. But there is a growing tendency to make the English department responsible for remedial reading. The results of a survey published in March, 1941, in the *Journal of Higher Education* showed that 105 of 172 replying institutions had remedial-reading programs and that these programs were being conducted by departments of psychology, of personnel, of speech, or of *English composition*. Hence, it is not unlikely that in the near future a growing number of English teachers will be assuming the responsibility of helping students with serious reading disabilities.

In addition to this remedial reading, there is the problem of developmental reading, or helping average and superior students develop hitherto undeveloped reading abilities. On the basis of a study some years ago at the State College of Washington, Professor C. W. Stone asserted “that the typical college student may readily increase his silent reading ability 50 % to 100 %.” A general survey of the studies on reading would show, I believe, that teachers of reading are like teachers of composition in

that they have spent far more time on students with inferior preparation and abilities and have let the better students shift for themselves. To assist these average and better students in developing better reading habits is the aim of such books as Professor Tenney's *Intelligent Reading*, and, while agreeing wholly with the purpose, I am here raising the question of adequate time for teaching such reading methods in an already very full curriculum.

A second important obstacle to adequate treatment of the reading problem in colleges is illustrated by the title of an article published a few years ago in *Harper's Magazine* by Burges Johnson—"Campus versus Classroom"—an article which developed the general thesis that the manifold extracurricular activities are taking more than their share of even our better students' time. Perhaps we mistakenly believe that students with reading—and other academic—difficulties have only one purpose in life: to remove those difficulties as rapidly as possible. An extreme example poses the question very well: Will John Smith, an average freshman with a reading disability, prefer to spend six hours a week trying to remove his disability or will he prefer to take these six hours, add fourteen to them, and spend them practicing with the freshman football team?

Third, most of the studies which have been made of the reading problem for any grade level, including college, have been made principally by psychologists, physicians, and educational experts, and have been written in a language that most of us cannot readily understand. In fact, one of our weaknesses may be that we do not understand many of the more commonly used technical terms in education and the statistics that they explain; and we depend, when necessary, upon

more simple explanations by a friendly colleague in the department of psychology.

More confusing even than the terminology is the fact that these reading authorities do not agree among themselves as to the value of their methods. Much, for example, has been made in recent years of mechanical devices in testing reading, such as the ophthalmograph, or eye-movement camera, and the metronoscope, and of the bearing of optical defects upon reading. Yet the Dartmouth study, *An Evaluation of Visual Factors in Reading*, has among its conclusions the following: that ocular defects occur no more frequently among students with reading disability and among those making low academic grades than among other students; that the eye-movement camera is not so good an indicator of reading ability as are other kinds of tests, or of probable success in college as measured by academic points; and that the correction of ocular defects does not guarantee immediate improvement in reading or academic performance.

A fourth obstacle in dealing with the reading problem is our very limited knowledge of the successful achievement of the reading-for-writing purpose. Most of us have assumed the truth of the statement that the more effectively a student reads, the more effectively he writes, and history may furnish examples of writers who formed their style by conscious imitation of models; but among the thousands of recent articles on the reading problem there is a noticeable lack of studies on the relationship of reading and writing. There have, indeed, been some studies, with consoling results, of the relationship of vocabulary and writing and of spelling and writing. But in an important study made at the University of Minnesota ten years ago on the reading

abilities of college students, Professor Alvin C. Eurich found that the experimental group, which devoted a third of each composition-class period to training in reading and vocabulary, "was not handicapped in satisfying the requirements in English because it devoted the amount of time stipulated to experimental purposes."⁷ In other words, the experimental group with such training apparently did not write better than the control group without any such training.

Much of the foregoing suggests a fifth obstacle, namely, that college teachers of English are not now equipped by training or experience to deal with the various phases of the reading problem as a problem in composition. The more progressive high schools have assumed that it is a problem for their English teachers. But on the college level some very interesting points arise: Should the composition teacher become also a teacher of reading? Should certain composition teachers, only, be trained as teachers of reading? Or should reading experts be engaged? Or, since literature is involved and since, it has been said, "the aim of every literature course should be to teach the student to *read* in the broadest meaning of the word," should the composition teachers place the whole burden upon the shoulders of the teachers of literature? Unfortunately, some colleges (especially in the technical field) offer no courses in literature; and in others which offer literature, most of us have a magical, protean ability of becoming either teachers of literature or teachers of composition as we enter the doors of certain classrooms. Hence, such a proposed shifting of the reading problem is magnificent in theory but nonsensical in practice.

⁷ Alvin C. Eurich, *The Reading Abilities of College Students* (Minneapolis, 1931), p. 91.

For the high schools it has been recommended that

every school should have a reading clinic, with teachers equipped to diagnose reading difficulties and prescribe corrective treatment. Of course the logical implications of the reading clinic are a different kind of training for the teacher of English, new curricula, and textbooks adapted to the needs of the various groups of pupils with their varying abilities.⁸

For the colleges it has been suggested as recently as March, 1941, by Professor Frances O. Triggs of the University of Minnesota Testing Bureau, that the training of at least the supervisor of a remedial-reading program be as follows:

He should probably have a Ph.D. or its equivalent because research and teaching are both necessary to establish a satisfactory program. He should be basically trained in educational psychology and student-personnel procedures . . . should know the best procedures for the teaching of reading from pre-school through college.⁹

If such teacher training were desirable for the colleges, we English teachers could expect to get little, if any, help on the problem of reading from the graduate schools of English, just as we have received little help from them on the problems of composition. Undoubtedly, a composition teacher, with the expenditure of much time on the study of authorities and with considerable assistance from the departments of education and psychology, could do much to prepare himself for dealing with the problem. But in the present English state of affairs, when for success in life three little magic letters after one's name are the gateway to paradise, an English instructor is lacking in foresight if he wastes

⁸ Stella S. Center and Gladys L. Persons, *Teaching High School Students To Read* (New York, 1937), p. 135.

⁹ Frances O. Triggs, "Current Problems in Remedial Reading for College Students," *School and Society*, LIII (March 22, 1941), 376, 377.

much time seriously considering the reading problem; and if and when he has attained those three little magic letters and has become a specialist in some field of literature, it seems ironical to ask him to junk two to four years' training to start on a—for him—entirely new field.

IV

But, since there is a reading problem in the colleges, the composition teacher and his colleagues must at least have some attitude toward it, in view of the estimates which have been made showing that 10-20 per cent of our freshmen come to college seriously deficient in reading ability, while many others are handicapped to a greater or less degree.

To what extent is that phase of the problem which concerns remedial and developmental reading the responsibility of the English department? We face the question especially when students are failing in mathematics, physics, chemistry, history, and other noncomposition subjects, because of inability to read, and we are asked what we are going to do about it.

For the entire remedial-reading program, and for a large part of the developmental-reading program, I believe—as the situation now is and in view of the obstacles previously mentioned—we are not primarily responsible. Since these kinds of reading parallel or approximate certain of the methods of learning to study, the practical solution is that we place the major responsibility upon departments of psychology and education. And in schools where such departments are weak or nonexistent, again the practical suggestion is that the English department encourage the development of such departments. Elsewhere I have written that I should like to see departments of English completely emanci-

pated from the tyranny—sometimes gentle and sometimes harsh—of departments of education. I still believe so. There are, however, no visible present signs of such emancipation but rather of an extension of their influence into our field. Since we have neglected important parts of our task, they have felt free to take them over. Objective testing in composition and literature, and teacher training in English are fair examples. In view of what they know, and we do not, about certain phases of our work, I suggest an attitude of co-operation with, rather than antagonism to, the departments of psychology and education. Any proposal advocating that English departments prepare to and eventually assume the responsibility for the reading problem, testing, and other such tasks is simply another proposal magnificent in theory but not feasible in practice. If some such practical solution is not sought, the English staff will of course have to assume, with a full realization of the great difficulties involved, the direction of reading along with the direction of composition and literature study.

But when we consider that an adequate treatment of the problem depends upon some knowledge of physiology, psychology, educational measurements, some speech training, and even some psychiatry, it is obvious that the department of English is not the place in which to initiate or develop such a reading program. It is significant that nearly all the experimental studies and publications on the subject have been made by doctors of medicine, psychologists, and educational experts, and—on the college level—the department of English has played at best only a supporting part.

In dealing with this part of the reading problem in the future, the English department should continue in such a sup-

porting role. The principal part of the program, which already is being carried out, wholly or partly in some institutions, under the supervision of departments of psychology and education, should be, in the words of Professor William S. Gray of the University of Chicago Department of Education, the following:

(1) A detailed study of the reading efficiency and study habits of all students at the time of admission; (2) information and guidance in general reading and study habits for all students in connection with some regular course, such as English, or a special "how to study" course which is required of everyone; (3) special sections of this course, in which additional intensive training may be provided for deficient readers who are above the twenty-fifth percentile in intelligence; (4) a special remedial group, or groups, with provision for clinical assistance, for students who rank in the lower twenty-fifth percentile in intelligence, and for others who are handicapped by unusual reading deficiencies; and (5) systematic guidance of a developmental type, as needed in each college course, which will enable students to acquire, as rapidly as their qualifications will permit, those habits of intelligent reading and efficient study that characterize superior students and productive workers in given fields.¹⁰

Even with such a program we should not be too optimistic about the results. To the Dartmouth conclusions already cited—namely, that ocular defects are found in both poor and good readers and that the eye-movement camera does not indicate reading ability so successfully as pencil-and-paper tests—there should be added the following important conclusion: "The provision of the extra reading program at Dartmouth College is to increase the speed of reading, but it does not guarantee gain in comprehension in reading or improvement in college grades."

¹⁰ "Provision for Individual Differences in Reading Efficiency," chap. xiii in *Provision for the Individual in College Education* (Chicago, 1932), p. 158.

And for that part of the reading problem which most closely concerns the teacher of composition, namely, the relation of reading to writing, the most sensible proposal for a possible solution is that we acquire more information about this relationship through a carefully prepared experimental program by which the writing abilities can be judged of two groups of students, one using reading as an aid to writing (experimental) and one not using such reading (control). On such a program considerable time and thought would have to be spent, and again we should have to depend for considerable assistance on our colleagues in education and psychology; indeed, we might make more progress if we make them the principals and ourselves the assistants in preparing such an experimental program. It is possible, also, that some kind of objective testing can be prepared which will likewise throw light on the value of reading for writing. We English teachers, though we no longer question the value of objective tests in certain parts of the compositional field, may question their value in testing reading; but even certain leaders in education have their doubts. Professor William S. Gray of the University of Chicago recently said that, while reading tests in recent years have shown significant progress in improving their validity, reliability, and usefulness, they have not shown much progress in measuring "certain highly important phases of reading, such as interpretation, appreciation, and ability to apply what is read in the solution of challenging problems."¹¹ But it is not hopeless to believe that such progress can be made.

As a by-product of an experiment at

¹¹ "A Decade of Progress," chap. i in *The Teaching of Reading: A Second Report—Thirty-sixth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* (Bloomington, Ill., 1937), p. 8.

Purdue University last year, an experiment involving twenty-five pairs of students, each pair being closely comparable on the basis of English training and psychological percentiles, we found that eleven students with lower scores on the reading part of an objective examination and eleven with lower scores on the vocabulary part had made higher grades on themes which, for some objective safety, were read by four readers. There were naturally many complicating and mitigating factors which throw much doubt on the results just given. These results, however, are just tantalizing enough to suggest further investigation.

It is true, of course, and has been often said, that "writing does not lend itself well to objective measures," but if, as

psychologists say, there is a degree of safety in having papers read by four readers, certainly this part of the problem could be dealt with reasonably well. More complicating is the fact that papers are graded according to varying emphases on content, vocabulary, spelling, diction, grammar, and punctuation, and there would have to be some parallel between the purpose for which students read and the standards by which the quality of their writing is determined. If these various complicating factors could be overcome, I think there would be, of a certain intellectual curiosity, great satisfaction in finding out the truth of the assumption that the more effectively a student reads, the more effectively he writes.

FROM THE PERSIA OF OMAR KHAYYAM

Omar Khayyam lived during parts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, several hundred years after the period of Persia's greatest glory.

Omar's Persia, although it lamented the grandeur that was past, was nevertheless a part of the famed Seljuk Empire which roused the Christian world to make its great series of Crusades. Contact with the Eastern world, of which the Persia of Omar's day was the cultural center, brought many new ideas of luxury into the rough lives of northern Europeans of the Middle Ages; names of these luxuries are Persian to this day.

"Jasmine" and "lilac," "orange" and "lemon," "crimson" and "scarlet," "taffeta" and "mull," "lacquer" and "shellac," "attar" and "musk" are all of Persian origin. "Candy," "aspic," "divan," "bazaar," and "caravan" are Persian. So are "tulip" and "turban," "azure," and "saffron," "borax" and "asafoetida."

Two interesting words, "shawl" and "pyjamas," were used by both Persians and Hindus long before the conquering European had any idea that he—or she—might have use for either of them. Whether

our forebears first got shawls from the looms of Persia or Kashmir we cannot tell; and we are not positive about our first knowledge of pyjamas either.

It is most likely, however, that the Hindus learned the words from the Persians and then taught them to the commercial gentlemen of the East India Company.

Shawls, although known generations before the French Revolution, did not become the rage in fashionable circles until the period in French history which directly preceded the First Empire.

At that time classical costumes became the style for women because people were blindly following the Greek classics, which were supposed to represent a true republican spirit.

The loose Greek draperies which left arms and shoulders bare were very uncomfortable during French winters, so traders did a thriving business in shawls and established the name for them in our language. Everybody had to follow the Parisian trend and have a shawl.

EPSY COLLING

INKSTER, NORTH DAKOTA

ROUND TABLE

"A PORTRAIT OF THE 'TYPICAL' INSTRUCTOR OF ENGLISH IN THE JUNIOR COLLEGE"—A COMMENT

I have read with much interest Mr. George Diel's article, "A Portrait of the 'Typical' Instructor of English in the Junior College," in the October issue of *College English*, in which he attempts to answer the two introductory challenging questions: "Who teaches English in the junior colleges of the United States?" and "What are some of the outstanding characteristics of the 'typical' instructor?"

The composite picture which Mr. Diel so vividly paints of preparation, qualifications, salary, and other features is none too flattering and leads him to his final paragraph in the form of another question: "Are the educational preparation and the professional status of the instructors of English in the junior college sufficiently high for competent and dynamic instruction?" The obvious answer is an emphatic "No!" Before accepting such an answer, however, it may not be inappropriate to consider the nature of the evidence presented.

As Mr. Diel points out on the first page of his article, his data are based upon returns from eighty-seven instructors in fifty-two public junior colleges in seven states—Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Utah. After presenting his composite picture based upon this limited group, he concludes:

How near this photograph comes to being a true representation of the typical junior college instructor of the entire nation could be determined only by extending the scope of the present study. It is to be doubted, though, that the picture would differ greatly from the present one, even if it were set up from a summary of a nation-wide survey.

I think it is legitimate to raise some question regarding the validity of the generaliza-

tion stated in the last sentence of the paragraph just quoted. The extent to which valid conclusions can be drawn for any population from a limited sample is conditioned, of course, upon the representative nature of the sample. I think it very doubtful whether the public junior colleges in the states named can fairly be taken as representative of all junior colleges—or even of all public junior colleges—in the United States.

In general, it may be expected that preparation, qualifications, and salaries will be somewhat higher in the larger institutions. Is Mr. Diel's sample representative from the standpoint of size? According to the latest *Junior College Directory, 1942*, the average enrolment in the 55 public junior colleges in the seven states named above was 331 students. In the 627 junior colleges of the country it was 429 students. In the 279 public junior colleges it was 707 students. The average public junior college, therefore, was almost twice the average size of the sample institutions used—scarcely representative as to size. Another way of saying essentially the same thing is that the sample involves about one-fifth of the public junior colleges, but that their total enrolment involves less than one-tenth of public junior college students—and probably not much over one-tenth of the total number of English instructors.

It is common knowledge in the educational world that the most significant development of public junior colleges has taken place in California. Last year the 47 public junior colleges in that state enrolled more than half of the total number of students in all public junior colleges in the country. A dozen of them had enrolments in excess of two thousand students each. California has commendably high standards for preparation and compensation of instructors, and it is fairly obvious that any generalization regarding all junior colleges or even all public

junior colleges which disregards California is open to some question.

Mr. Diel has presented a significant group of data in compact and attractive form. They should certainly be accepted as reliable and valid for the seven states studied, and they are eminently worth while from that standpoint. But, before accepting them as "a true representation of the typical junior college instructor of the entire nation," I am inclined to believe it may be necessary to follow the slower and more expensive and time-consuming process of "extending the scope of the present study" to cover the country—or at least to utilize a sampling process which will assure adequate representation of all sizes, types, and classifications of junior colleges.

WALTER CROSBY EELLS
Executive Secretary

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF JUNIOR COLLEGES
WASHINGTON, D.C.

LATIN WORDS IN STUDENTS' ENGLISH

What is the extent of the Latin element in the active English vocabulary of the average college student? What kinds of English composition require the highest proportion of words of classical origin? What effect on his vocabulary has a student's knowledge or ignorance of Latin? What type of student is likely to use a more heavily Latinized diction? It is hoped that the data here presented will throw some light on these questions.

The material examined in this study consists of compositions handed in as required work for an English composition course by a group of twenty-eight second-year college students. A count was made of the words of classical Latin or Greek origin in the first two hundred words of each of three compositions written during the year. Of these three compositions, one was an informal essay, one a critical discussion, and one a descriptive sketch. It seemed desirable to count not only the number of separate

words of classical origin in each case but the number of different classical words in each sampling of two hundred words. Table 1 shows the findings.

First one notes that the total of 3,340 represents 19.9 per cent of the total number of words studied. At first sight this seems rather low, but it is well known that informal writing is less highly Latinized than

TABLE 1

	In- formal	Criti- cal	Descrip- tive	Total
Total number of classical words	1,039	1,411½	889½	3,340
Percentage..	18.5	25.2	15.9	19.9
Average number of <i>different</i> clas- sical words out of total of 200 words.....	32.7	39.4	27.5	33.2

formal criticism and that pictorial writing like poetry often draws still more heavily on the resources of Anglo-Saxon diction.¹ It is interesting to observe that this gradation clearly appears in the material here examined. Whether consciously or not, the students in this group have allowed the type of composition they were writing to determine what proportion of classical words they should employ. It would therefore have been misleading if only one type of composition had been examined. Only the inclusion of a variety of types gives a fair picture of the sources of a writer's vocabulary. Needless to say a sample of a student's ordinary conversation would probably be even less Latinized than his descriptive essay and an extract from a technical scientific paper even more Latinized than the critical composition.

It is unsatisfactory, however, to consider only the total number of Latin words em-

¹ Three samples of two hundred words taken at random from twentieth-century prose writers revealed the following percentages of classical words:
Informal (Dorothy Sisson, *Ears*) 19.75
Critical (B. Iddings Bell, *Economic Morality for the New Age*) 27.5
Descriptive (Joseph Conrad, *The Mirror of the Sea*)... 16.0

played. A high percentage of Latin words when the same words keep reappearing cannot fairly be regarded as indicating a greater degree of Latinization than is found when a smaller total number contains few repetitions. The figures in the second column of my table reveal that students undoubtedly do employ a more definitely Latinized vocabulary in formal criticism; but, whereas informal and descriptive writing have approximately the same proportion of different Latin words as compared with the total number of Latin words, that ratio is much lower for critical writing. This point, I believe, has implications that are likely to be ignored by classical scholars when discussing the Latin element in our present-day vocabulary.

The next point to consider is the effect, if any, of a student's knowledge of Latin on the Latin content of his active vocabulary. That a knowledge of Latin increases one's ability to recognize the meaning of English words derived from Latin is well established, but the active employment of such words is a different matter. The group of students here investigated consisted of seventeen arts students who had completed one year of Latin or Greek at college after having fulfilled entrance requirements in Latin and of eleven science students who had had an average of less than one year of Latin, most of the eleven having had none. The group is too small for any useful correlation to be established between the two sections, and in any case the science section happens to have a lower record of achievement not only in English but on the aggregate of all academic subjects. One point, however, does emerge. The total number of Latin words shown in the table for the entire group amounted to 19.9 per cent; for the science section the percentage was 19.5. The difference here is small enough to be practically negligible, and the implication is unescapable that a student's ignorance of Latin even when coupled with a comparatively low academic standing has no appreciable effect in diminishing the total number of Latin words his English compositions will contain. In

critical writing the science students of my group show an average proportion of 26.4 per cent for the total number of Latin words—actually 2 per cent higher than the arts students. It is true that even here they actually use rather fewer *different* Latin words than do the arts students, but their evident partiality for the Latin words they do use is not easy to reconcile with the conventional attitude of science undergraduates toward the baleful influence of dead languages.

What of the relation between the quality of a student's writing and the degree of Latinization shown by his vocabulary? Here our data can be more confidently interpreted. The combined grade for the year in English literature and composition seemed for this particular group to provide a safer criterion of literary ability than the grade in composition alone. Though certainly not an infallible criterion, this combined grade coincides very closely with the instructors' estimates of the students' ability in writing as distinct from their success in acquiring marks. How, then, does the student's grade in English correlate with the amount of Latin in his vocabulary?

As far as the total number of Latin words is concerned, the answer for the group as a whole is not at all. The students were listed in an order corresponding to the total number of Latin words used by each in the compositions that were studied. The correlation between this list and the list in which they were arranged according to their rank in English for the year worked out at 0.04. The fact that a given individual uses a rather higher-than-average or rather lower-than-average total number of Latin words reveals nothing as to the goodness or badness of his writing. But it was also discovered that the seven students whose work showed the highest total of Latin words included three from the seven who ranked highest in English and one from the seven who ranked lowest; the seven students with the lowest total of Latin words included three from the highest seven in the class and three from the lowest seven. A very good student, that is to say, is likely (and equally

likely) to use either an unusually large or an unusually small total number of Latin words; a very weak student is unlikely to use a very large number and almost as likely as not to use a very small number. What a count of the total number of Latin words does not reveal but what is nonetheless true is that the very good student who uses few Latin words is using them with deliberate economy; the weak student indiscriminately and repeatedly uses all he knows.

When it comes to the number of *different* Latin words it is another story. Here correlation with rank in English is 0.47, not high, indeed, but positive. And what is decidedly significant is that, although the best students are on the whole not very likely to use within a compass of two hundred words a specially large number of different Latin words, five of the seven students who use the smallest number of different Latin words rank among the lowest seven in their English grade. It should be remembered, of course, that these weaker students are likely to use a correspondingly low proportion of different Germanic words, but that is something beyond the scope of this study.

Still more important, one might suppose, than the number of different Latin words employed would be the ratio between that number and the total number of Latin words. And between the students' rank with respect to this ratio and their year's rank in English we find a correlation of 0.61—a correlation which would, no doubt, be still closer if the English grades were an absolutely accurate reflection of relative literary capacity. A low ratio, however, corresponds rather less closely with low marks in English than did a low total of different

Latin words. But, of the seven students ranking highest on the ratio, three also rank among the seven best students in English. These three, it is interesting to discover, are identical with the three from the highest quartile in the class included among the seven using the smallest total number of Latin words. The composition instructor characterizes the style of these three students as terse, readable, and unpretentious.

It is hoped that this study will be of some value to the defenders of classical education. The writer has attempted to interpret the data with complete impartiality, but he has shown that students, whether they know it or not, make much use of Latin words in their vocabulary—more in some kinds of writing than in others. He has suggested that under certain circumstances the less Latin they know, the more Latin words they will use—and not very successfully at that. He has indicated that the frequency with which one uses words of Latin origin has certainly something to do with the goodness or badness of one's style, though admittedly the connection is too elusive to be properly analyzed by the crude statistical methods that have here been employed. There is no suggestion that Latinless students may not do creditably or even brilliantly in English composition. But it may with confidence be asserted that a teacher of composition is performing a very incompetent job if he is not equipped to assess the character of the Latin element in his pupils' diction and to consider its bearing upon the quality of their work.

EIVION OWEN

BISHOP'S COLLEGE
LENNOXVILLE, QUEBEC

CURRENT ENGLISH FORUM

Can you direct me to a reference that would give the derivation of the words "jalopy" and "flivver?"

H. S. C.

None of the dictionaries has any etymological information about the first of these. *Flivver* is recorded in the Supplement to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The earliest meaning given there is that of a failure or weak incompetent. This is cited from *Rugles of Red Gap* (1915), and the earliest instance of its application to an automobile is dated 1920. On the basis of this evidence, it is assumed that the second meaning is an extension of the first. Eric Partridge, in his *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, suggests further that originally the word was a blend of *flop* or *flopper*, and *fizzle*.

All this, of course, is predicated on the assumption that the five-year gap in the citations collected by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is an accurate parallel or reflection of the development of the meaning of this word. However, in the earliest citation a certain person is characterized as a *human flivver*, and the very fact that this qualifying adjective is present suggests that the earliest application of the word was not to human beings. If so, then it is also possible that the Partridge derivation is in error.

I am treasurer of a missionary society which is composed of many ladies, but on all stationery used in correspondence with me I find "The Woman's Presbyterial Society." I should like to know whether the singular or plural is correct in a name of this type and should like to be able to quote authority to justify one form or the other.

L. B.

The authority which you seek in respect to the use of *woman's* or *women's* is easily

accessible in the unabridged Webster dictionary in the synonymy under the entry *woman*. The comment is as follows: "*Woman's*, *women's* are often used without real distinction. Strictly *woman's* refers to women collectively or in the abstract; *women's* regards them as individuals." In other words, both forms are wholly acceptable but reflect a slightly different concept or aspect of the word *woman*.

You may be interested in, although you should perhaps not take too seriously, the following excerpt taken from an article written by the late Professor Fred Newton Scott some thirty years ago:

A considerable number of persons hate the plural form *women*, as being weak and whimpering, though the singular *woman* connotes for the same persons ideas of strength and nobility. It is for this reason perhaps that *woman's building*, *woman's college*, *woman's club* and the like have supplanted in popular speech the forms *women's building*, *women's college*, etc. It is noteworthy also that in the titles of magazines and names of women's clubs the singular in most instances has displaced the plural.

A business firm writes in regard to an order for "a ladies' bicycle" or "a lady's bicycle." What should we advise them?

H. M.

No particular authority on the English language has given his attention to the question you raise, the relative acceptability of *lady's* or *ladies'*. The foregoing comments on the forms *woman's* and *women's* are, however, undoubtedly germane to your problem. Moreover, in the citations for *lady* in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Definition 17, *lady's* is used with considerably greater frequency than *ladies'*. It would seem, therefore, that the former might be the preferable term for the business firm in question to use.

In a pamphlet prepared for the instruction of teachers in A. R. P. practices, the following use of "experiencing" appeared: "There is no pattern which needs to be followed except to see that the types of 'experiencing' which characterize effective learning are provided for as fully as conditions permit." Will you be kind enough to comment upon the use of the word in this example.

F. V. L.

The comment which you request must necessarily be a wholly personal reaction since there is no authoritative information available about the use of this word. *Experiencing* is not listed as a head word in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, nor does it occur in the citations under *experience*, vb.; but this is not necessarily a condemnation of the word, since not every verbal noun in the language is so listed. Nor is this given as a head word in Webster's *New International Dictionary*, although it is listed among the forms of the verb *experience*. However, the listing does not indicate whether the -ing form is a present participle or a verbal noun, which leads one to suspect that it was included primarily to show the spelling.

Because there is no concrete evidence on the basis of recorded usage—that is to say, neither an affirmation nor a denial—there remains only the possibility of subjective judgment. It might be argued that, because *experience* first came into the language as a noun and was converted into a verb a century and a half later, a new conversion of the verb *experience* into the verbal noun is superfluous. Yet this same process has happened often—with the word *experiment*, for example—and our language seems to find a use for the verbal as well as the original noun. The question, then, is whether this is true of *experience* as well.

There are two considerations which might lead one to such a conclusion. First, the verb *experience* has come to have a somewhat technical meaning in educational jar-

gon, and it may be that the verbal noun suggests the technical sense of *experience* more readily than the older substantive. It might be judged subjectively also that *experiencing* as a noun implies greater activity on the part of the subject than the noun *experience*. These arguments, however, are incapable of proof and may be affirmed or denied with equal heat on a purely emotional basis.

May I call your attention to a statement made on page 676 of the April "College English": "We do hear fellow and bellow—but not hollo." Evidently the writer has not lived in Kentucky or Tennessee or neighboring states. Hollo is the common pronunciation. Sometimes my students spell it hollow. Holler is the northern expression, as I happen to know by coming from the North and living in the South. On the other hand, some sections of the South say winder for window. I thought you might be interested to know this fact.

AMY L. PERSON

A recent monograph on *The Phonetics of Great Smoky Mountain Speech* by Joseph Sargent Hall indicates that the pronunciation *holler* is frequent in eastern Tennessee at least, although he implies that the pronunciations *holluh* and *hollo* also exist there. It may be, of course, that the spelling *hollow* which you occasionally find in your students' themes arises from the fact that they pronounce not only the noun *hollow* with a final -er but also such words as *bellow*, *fellow*, *meadow*. Students of the history of the language characterize this phenomenon by the term *back* or *reverse* spelling.

The -er pronunciation for such words as *window*, *yellow*, *swallow*, *meadow*, etc., are, as you say, characteristic of a fairly large part of the South and, according to the records of the Survey of Folk Speech of the Great Lakes Area, are occasionally found somewhat north of the Ohio River.

NEWS AND NOTES

THE PERIODICALS

The case for the humanities in a time of peril to the national welfare is forcibly advanced by Theodore M. Greene in the *Journal of Higher Education* for October. The humanities are the disciplines whose special responsibility it is to strengthen our sense of cultural, moral, and spiritual values. These values have an objective character—there are works of art, moral standards to be recognized and obeyed, and a divine principle which all in the Christian tradition conceive of as a real existent Divine Being. All the humanities depend, first, upon linguistic discipline, a training in the languages, verbal and artistic, with the aid of which men have reflected upon values. Second, the humanities are exploratory disciplines in fact-finding and factual interpretation. Third, they are disciplines in sensitive appreciation, for the cultivation of the aesthetic, moral, and religious sensitivities. Fourth, they are disciplines in wise reflection, which is always a dual perspective, partly historical and partly systematic or philosophical. Finally, the humanities can and should provide a discipline in reflective commitment. Of this kind of action the successful surgeon is a fine example. When confronted with a critical case, he quickly marshals all the available medical knowledge and operates, knowing that his decision may be wrong but that bold action is necessary.

Individual and national welfare in a democracy require useful and effective citizens, and it is not easy to distinguish the education best suited to individual ends from that best suited to the ends of citizenship. In general, the right education for a democracy is identical with the best liberal education which the individual can acquire.

Of great importance in the war is the battle of symbols, President Roosevelt

against Hitler. Abstract words are now fighting words, and the question is, "How can we prevent mankind from being dominated by symbols that our enemies use for their purposes?" In the *Antioch Review* for fall James MacGregor Burns demonstrates the President's fitness for this battle by the example of his skill in the 1936 election campaign. His key symbol was "security," and this he related constantly to the objective set of policies which motivated the New Deal. His efforts were greatly strengthened by the aggressive nature of his campaign. "I am not here to defend the New Deal; I am here to proclaim it." He avoided the negative meaning (security as protection from something) and set up the positive meanings of improved working conditions, improved farming conditions, and increased provision for the dependent.

Hitler knows propaganda. Attacking such symbols as pacificism, democracy, and the Jews, he exalts the fatherland, the German race, and discipline. Like us, the Nazi proclaim they are fighting for freedom. The battle has been narrowed down to possession of this one symbol. Invariably Hitler has used "freedom" to mean some positive gain—freedom for equality with other nations, for unity. In his usage it means freedom for the masses to enjoy security as opposed to democratic freedom—which is said to be freedom of the democratic nations to exploit the world and freedom of the plutocrats to exploit the masses.

President Roosevelt's Four Freedoms date back to July 5, 1940, when in a press conference he accepted "freedom from want" as one of our long-range peace objectives. The President's condemnation of the Nazis' freedom to "dominate and enslave the human race" has been eloquent. But can we hope to evoke the full strength of our present and potential support simply by

weakening the impact of the Nazi ideological attack? We must implement with deeds the Four Freedoms, challenged by the Nazis as empty words concealing such facts as the Tories' domination of India. We are told that Goebbels had the Atlantic Charter reprinted verbatim in the German newspapers, in some cases with no editorial comment. If we want the Four Freedoms to have meaning and impact, they must be fortified by "the propaganda of the deed" on a vaster scale than ever before.

The works of Thomas Mann divide according to the periods of social history which they cover, changing tone and structure according to the change in events. Despite their unusual variation, Edwin Berry Bergum has made a synthesis of the novels in his article, "The Sense of the Present in Thomas Mann," which appears in the fall *Antioch Review*.

The first of the novels, *His Royal Highness*, is the story of a German aristocrat whose antiquated feudal culture gives way before his wealthy American wife. Unlike Henry James, Mann did not take the aristocratic principle seriously; his firm bourgeois perspective enabled him to adopt a tone of whimsical burlesque, which, in terms of history, is all the theme deserved. *Buddenbrooks*, however, presents a world which Mann has always taken seriously. It relates the destiny of a family of merchants through three generations, beginning in 1838. The unruffled, matter-of-fact style fosters the reception of the novel as valid social history, though Mann was unaware of the economic trend from the open market in Germany to consolidation and state aid. He identified himself with the dominant social system, shrewdly portrayed its weaknesses, and approved its values. In *Tonio Kroger* he resolved the antagonism between the self-indulgent artist and the crude man of affairs by reasoning that art is decadent until the artist becomes aware of the neglected ethical basis of the ordinary bourgeois qualities within himself.

The pessimism of which the artist, Tonio, could not free himself gained the ascendancy

over Mann as he wrote *The Magic Mountain*. In this novel the ironical style, used as a device for escaping the melancholy induced by a conscientious observation of the facts, is typical of the intellectual life of the twenties. *The Magic Mountain* is a history of the breakdown of a system which *Buddenbrooks* showed had once been stable. Most of the inmates of the sanatorium lose touch with the world of affairs, becoming cynical and decadent, until, like Settembrini, they are unable to take any kind of action, or, like Peeperkorn, the international capitalist, they end in reckless violence. Representing a new low in human depravity, the life of the sanatorium in *The Magic Mountain* could not last. The war served for Hans Castorp as a purification by death and suffering.

In the Joseph stories Mann states a universal philosophy. The career of Joseph symbolizes Mann himself and all anti-Fascists who have been forced into exile. Nations, like individuals, always require the therapy of suffering. From base material interests arises fascism, which calls men of strong moral character to their senses and leads them to work for the ascendancy of man's better nature. Reading history in terms of this dualism between good and evil rather than as an evolving process of events has had a bad effect upon Mann's fiction. The long interpolations of mystical philosophy hold up the narrative, and their vagueness gives a sense of unreality to the most specific situations. The effect of this philosophy upon the characterization of the hero is such that the Joseph stories are dull.

Three years ago Mormon life was untouched by novelists, but *Children of God* (1939), by Vardis Fisher, is the first of nine novels which have now come from the presses. Dal L. Morgan, in the *Rocky Mountain Review* for fall, gives the list as follows, Fisher's novel not repeated: Jean Woodman's *Glory Spent* (1940), Paul Bailey's *For This Is My Glory* (1940), Rhoda Nelson's *This Is Freedom* (1940), Maurine Whipple's *The Giant Joshua* (1940), Lorene

Pearson's *The Harvest Waits* (1941), Hoffman Birney's *Ann Carmeny* (1941), Elinor Pryor's *And Never Yield* (1942), and Virginia Sorenson's *A Little Lower than the Angels* (1942). Of these novels, Mr. Morgan says that Fisher's, Whipple's, Pearson's, and Sorenson's may be regarded, for various reasons, as important.

Of late years, Louise Pound has not participated in ballad controversy, but the perseverance of old theories has again forced her to protest. In "Literary Anthologies and the Ballad," published in the *Southern Folklore Quarterly* for September, Miss Pound makes two objections to the editorial presentation of the ballad selections in three popular anthologies for college survey courses. First, the editors repeat the romantic notions of the ballads' communal origin in folk dances and, second, they mislead students about the chronology of the ballad texts.

On the subject of ballads the scholarly world has gone beyond armchair theorizing, thanks to firsthand investigation and careful reporting. Scholars recognize that authentic folk improvisations are far below the quality of the traditional ballads, which present a forceful, sustained narrative in effective form. The subject matter of the ballads, furthermore, with their fairies, supernatural beings, lords and ladies, does not reflect the interests of humble folk. Imaginative illiteracy does not produce narrative songs with well-told plots. Isolated rural folk may sing songs adapted to local conditions or retain old songs, but lasting pieces do not seem to emerge from groups on social occasions.

The dance-origin theory seems related to the accident that, in the eighteenth century, the word "ballad," deriving from the Latin *ballare*, "to dance," was appropriated to mean a short narrative poem. As to its improbability, we might try to imagine our present popular square-dance groups extemporizing as they dance story-songs of fair length and remembering them.

The ballad sections are usually placed in the anthologies between Chaucer and the sixteenth century. Yet there is no evidence

that the majority of the ballads really emerge from the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. Some favorites, such as "Johnny Armstrong" and "Mary Hamilton," are based on events occurring in the sixteenth century. Others, such as "Edward," are read in the language and form of the eighteenth-century Scotch folk song. In general, the date of most of the Child ballads should be moved forward to later centuries. Their heyday came during or after the Renaissance.

Since folk song is not static, the progress of ballad airs from one influence to another has often cheapened them. More than one beautiful old modal melody has turned into an indifferent modern tune. Philip Gordon in "The Music of the Ballads" (*Southern Folklore Quarterly* for September) explains that, to understand old ballad airs, one must become familiar with a different scale. The folk tunes were based not on the construction and relation of chords but on melody, which, in turn, was based on different consecutive combinations, or scales, of notes. Long after the medieval modes disappeared from academic music, they survived in tradition, producing variants if they had not been published and confined to one version. The ballad singer shaped the tune anew into something which became his own. Words and tune in the ballad do not form the kind of unity one finds in a composer's song setting. Only suitability to the general mood of the story is required. The same tune might be subtly enlivened or subdued according to the tone of different narratives. Words and music, in the ballad-song, are closely allied by rhythm. A dozen different tunes may be used for the same ballad, but in every case the rhythm of the tune controls the beat of the words, so that sometimes the only way to get the rhythm of a line is to sing it.

The fight of the guerrillas in the Yugoslav mountains has again brought to the fore the close relation between poetry and the national history of the Serbs. F. C. Weiskopf,

in *Poetry* for November, introduces this tradition to American allies. After the Turks conquered the southern Slavs in the fourteenth century, Balkan Robin Hoods became famous. The songs of their deeds saved the national language and kept the spirit of freedom alive. When Karadjich, a great Serbian teacher, published the first collection of the epic poems, hitherto transmitted orally, the geniuses of European poetry—Goethe, Byron, and Heine—bowed in admiration. For five centuries the ballads of the Battle on Kossovo Poyle were sung by *guslars*, or caravan drivers. In a recent Italian report of an engagement against “rebels” in Croatia, the leader of the band was called “a *guslar* and bandit.”

A study of the spellings of words in eight pages of *Huckleberry Finn*, in which Nigger Jim relates an adventure, demonstrates that Mark Twain was sincere and competent in his representation of Negro dialect. James Nathan Tidwell summarizes the results of the study in the October *American Speech*. One group of the respelled words shows low colloquial pronunciations, such as “afeard,” “alwuz” (stressed), and “awluz” (unstressed). Twain indicates southern dialect by dropping unstressed syllables, omitting post-vocalic final *r*’s, diphthongizing short *e* (“leg” to “laig”), and preserving the archaic pronunciation of *oi* (“p’int”). There are only two Negro language features in Jim’s speech, the shift from *nuth’n* to *nuff’n* and from *they* to *dey*. Twain’s virtuosity is best seen in the variant spellings for the same word. For *and*, *en* is the ordinary unstressed form, *an* is stressed, and *’n* occurs in a stereotyped expression, “up’n died.”

A criticism of “The Verb System of Basic English” is developed by Chad Walsh in *American Speech* for October. The BE word list contains only eighteen verbs, and in BE the function of verbs is greatly restricted. Ogden is influenced by Jeremy Bentham, who was suspicious both of abstract words and of verbs. This means that in StE there is a larger proportion of verbs in all tenses

and of verb phrases with infinitives and auxiliaries, but in BE the proportion of verbs followed by prepositions, nouns, and adjectives is much larger. Examples of BE forms are: “I got ready,” “I put him to death,” and “I do damage to the house.” In the paradigms of BE, shifts in construction are necessary. Past participles, for example, are included among the BE adjectives, but the underlying verb is lacking. Hence the following shift occurs from the active to the passive voice:

The law was broken by me.
I went against the law.

Since the main use of BE is the instruction of foreigners, simplicity and consistency are qualities desirable to the system. A foreigner would probably find it easier to remember “damage the house” than “do damage to the house.” Functional shift, if permitted at all, should be allowed as freely as in StE, and this practice would eliminate the unnecessary difficulties of the rules now governing the verb conjugation of BE. The ideal system of teaching English to foreigners will emphasize the normal grammatical patterns and will eagerly take advantage of useful devices like functional shift.

The popular novels of Aldous Huxley were appreciated mainly for their lively satire of baboons and antiquaries. In his last two novels, however, Huxley loses his objects of satire in the sermons or solemn monologues of the main characters. In the *American Scholar* for autumn W. Y. Tindall explains that “The Trouble with Aldous Huxley” is, first, the influence of Gerald Heard, the way to which was prepared by D. H. Lawrence, and, second, the romantic temper.

Culture and cynicism, the content of the novels from *Crome Yellow* to *Point Counter Point*, were of some comfort to Huxley, but the novelist found his intellectualism hollow and acknowledged a spiritual need. Lawrence at first repelled Huxley more than he attracted him. Rampion, in *Point Counter Point* (1928), shows the growing attachment, however, and in 1931 Huxley in

Music at Night hailed Lawrence as a champion of human wholeness. Later, a visit to Mexico, as described in *Beyond the Mexique Bay* (1934), was disenchanting, for Huxley found the noble savage ignoble and Lawrence's *Plumed Serpent* false. Nevertheless, Lawrence freed Huxley from negative cynicism, gave him suspicions of science and pure reason, and showed him the value, if society was to be saved, of an oasis from which the profane could be excluded.

Gerald Heard, the man whose influence has come to dominate Huxley, most completely sets forth his view of the nature of things in *The Social Science of Religion* (1934). Reasoning from a compound of anthropology, psychoanalysis, and intuition, Heard believes that the remedy for our troubles, both individual and social, is not economic, but religious. For the cause of pacifism, Huxley, working with Heard, wrote one pamphlet and Heard another. Together, they investigated the Quaker communities of Pennsylvania and again published tracts in 1937. Both advocated the training of the mind-body unit in the way of the yogis and the Buddhists, by suitable exercises and systematic contemplation. Master and disciple then retired to California.

In *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936) Anthony Beavis represents Huxley's turning from skepticism to a synthetic oriental mysticism under the tutelage of Mr. Miller. The last novel, *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* (1939), presents Heard again, as Mr. Propter, whose meditations have little effect on the other personages in the book, most of them unregenerative specimens like the earlier Huxley characters.

Huxley's California mysticism may have been influenced by Heard and Lawrence, but it is also a familiar response to the disorder of our times. Since the development of materialistic science the traditional religions have failed to satisfy many sensitive, religious men. From Carlyle and Emerson

down to Samuel Butler, Shaw, Yeats, and Lawrence literary men have invented religions of their own. This position is responsible for romanticism—which is essentially the effort to restore spiritual meaning to a world without it and to transcend the limitations that materialistic science seems to have imposed upon men. Literary works in this movement sacrifice aesthetic beauty and dramatic form for the preaching of the private religion; the novel or play falters under the weight of the monologue.

A penetrative interpretation of Henry James's development from the period of his earlier writing to the period of his major novels has been published by R. P. Blackmur in the *Kenyon Review* for autumn. Mr. Blackmur shows that *The Sacred Fount* (1900) is the transitional work in which James demonstrated that his preparation for the great later work had been completed. In this novel James succeeded in merging the external form of the fable (which dominates in such tales as *The Altar of the Dead*), the mediate or psychological form of the plot, and the substantive or poetic form which belongs especially to the novel.

"Poetry's Dark Night," in the *Kenyon Review* for spring, is the title of an essay by Jacques Maritain, in which the Catholic philosopher and critic argues that the weaknesses of poetry since Poe and Baudelaire have been caused largely by the descent of poets from the level of the rational intellect into the abysses of the unconscious or the spirit. An answer to M. Maritain by Harold Rosenberg appears in the *Partisan Review* for September-October. Mr. Rosenberg demonstrates that modern poetry has no frontiers which it is forbidden to cross. "It is serious about all former miracles, including that of Grace; since Grace too is a human condition and can therefore be understood and perhaps ultimately produced at will."

BOOKS

*APPROACH TO AMERICA*¹

There is always room for another useful book of readings for freshman composition courses. *Approach to America* eminently fulfils the requirement of usefulness. Each of its forty-one selections is followed by a series of ingeniously contrived editorial aids grouped under the headings "Reading," "Vocabulary," and "Writing." Under "Reading" we find questions on the text itself: "Questions of Fact" and "Questions for Discussion." This material alone is sufficient to make the book welcome to the college instructor who is struggling with the austere bare-text anthology. The section "Vocabulary" provides thoughtful, interesting comment and query on chosen words. This portion of the editorial apparatus does something for the student that few books of this kind have ever attempted: it brings word meanings to life and lays a respectable foundation for later study of linguistics. To consolidate this important feature of the book, the editors have gathered into an index all the words highlighted under "Vocabulary." Finally, the section on "Writing" offers ten subjects for themes on subjects derived from or collateral to the ideas of the text. Here will be found a never-failing answer to the never-failing question, "What can I write about?" for most of the suggested topics call for personal reactions and will give plenty of room for the exercise of the perpendicular pronoun.

The title, *Approach to America*, indicates the nature of the contents of the book. More specifically, the editors state:

It aims to provide a comprehensive view of the United States, its people, its enterprises,

¹ Edited by Walter Havighurst, Robert F. Almy, and Joseph M. Bachelor. New York: Odyssey Press, 1942. Pp. viii + 584.

and its beliefs. Every region of the country is represented, from New England to California, from the Florida keys to the wilderness empire of the Northwest; and to each region are brought diverse points of view and a variety of treatment. Though the book is far from exhaustive, it tells much and suggests more. For the most part the selections are personal and direct; they are rooted in experience rather than reflection. We believe there may be more discovery of democratic ideals in a living picture of American life than in a series of expository pronouncements upon democracy.

The selections are grouped in four parts: (1) "Local Scenes and Persons," (2) "Local Experiences," (3) "Glances Backward," and (4) "Interpretations." All but three or four of the authors are American-born, and all but two are still living. Thus *Approach to America* is distinctly a testament of our times. The roll of contributors reads like a contemporary *Who's Who* in American letters, including as it does Stephen Vincent Benét, Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis, Carl Sandburg, Louis Bromfield, John Steinbeck, Edna Ferber, and Thomas Wolfe, to mention only a few of the reviewer's favorites.

A word should be said about the physical qualities of the book: the type—Baskerville linotype and Bulmer—is excellent, and the page is not overcrowded—compensations for the gray paper our eyes are slowly getting accustomed to; best of all, the book opens well, although it does not give promise of much sturdiness.

The industry and judgment that have gone into this book make it outstanding in its field. I for one would be glad to use it.

TOM B. HABER

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

THE NEGRO CARAVAN¹

This new anthology of Negro writing is in many respects a notable achievement. It is the most comprehensive and representative collection of its kind which has yet been compiled. All the literary forms, including the novel, are represented, with the selections arranged chronologically under each category. The broad scope of the book has enabled the editors to include a substantial number of writers who have never before been represented in Negro anthologies. Many of the lesser-known nineteenth-century authors are thus given belated recognition. The editors' statement that some of these authors, such as David Ruggles, Charlotte Forten, Charles Langston, and others, were included not only in the interests of comprehensiveness but because their work is intrinsically "interesting and pertinent" is corroborated by the specific selections themselves. In addition to these heretofore neglected authors, certain significant groups of writings, such as antislavery pamphlets, fugitive-slave narratives, and journalistic items, are for the first time given anthology representation. At the same time, however, the familiar and established names are much in evidence. Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, Paul Dunbar, Leslie Pinckney Hill, Booker Washington, W. E. B. DuBois, Richard Wright, and other prominent figures in Negro writing of both past and present are accorded their rightful positions in the *Caravan* by generous and well-chosen selections.

One of the most valuable and important features of this book is the introductory and critical material. This applies equally to the general introduction, to the critical and historical introductions to the several sections, and to the biographical sketches of the individual authors. These introductions, if grouped together, would constitute a very

useful survey history of Negro writing in America.

Throughout their descriptive critical commentaries, the editors stress the importance of seeing Negro life and experience through the mind and the spirit of the Negro himself. In no other way can a clear and intelligent understanding of his nature, his outlook, his condition, and his achievement be acquired. Only the Negro, they insist, can fully interpret and represent the Negro to himself or to the white man. This, it seems to me, is a particularly valid point in the light of the fact that the prevailing tendency is still in the direction of judging the Negro in terms of the conventional, stereotyped impressions created by the most popular, if not by the most penetrating, of the white authors who depict Negro life.

Another significant thought brought forward by the editors deserves particular attention; namely, that the setting-apart of Negro writing into a special category regarded as separate and distinct from other writing is both a social and a critical mistake. Thus they carefully avoid using the term "Negro literature." Negro writing, they rightly maintain, like Jewish, Italian, or Armenian writing in America, is an integral part of American literature and should be judged, along with all other writing, by a single standard on its own intrinsic merits and not, condescendingly, by a different standard.

The cumulative effect of this broad panorama of Negro writing is to impress one with the richness, variety, and solid literary merit of a substantial portion of the material presented. The collection reveals the steady line of progress and development which Negro literary expression has been following in its comparatively brief history. Thus at the present time the writing being done by an increasing number of Negro authors in various mediums can readily bear appraisal by the same criteria applied to writing in general. In other words, this helps to demonstrate the fact that some of the best American writing has been and is being produced by Negroes. For this and other reasons, as

¹ *The Negro Caravan: Writings by American Negroes*. Selected and edited by Sterling A. Brown, Arthur P. Davis, and Ulysses Lee. New York: Dryden Press, 1942. Educational ed., \$3.25; trade ed., \$4.25.

suggested above, the editors have rendered a signal service not only to the Negro but equally to the general student of American literature and to all who would be adequately informed with respect to American literary and intellectual achievements.

HOWARD W. HINTZ

BROOKLYN COLLEGE

*A GUIDE TO BETTER ENGLISH*¹

The functional view of composition approaches language as a medium for the effective communication of effective thinking; the formalistic view, which implicitly assigns a positive virtue to mere correctness, approaches language as pattern. In freshman courses dominated by the functional view Professor Wilson's *A Guide to Better English* might serve as a supplementary handbook or reference book; in those dominated by the formalistic view it might well serve as the chief text.

Either as text or as handbook, it possesses idiosyncrasies. Probably by intent, it is constructed in such a way as to render the use on themes of numbered references to handbook rules quite impractical. The author occasionally employs, but never intrusively, the first-person pronoun. The spaces or pages left blank for the student's notes or for dictated comments of the instructor are equally harmless; at worst they are convenient for doodles.

The question may be raised, however, whether Professor Wilson's view of language is not too logical, too static, insufficiently empirical, and insufficiently dynamic: "[Present-day standard English] has reached a stage of clarity and beauty. . . . And the

fewer liberties taken with speech after it has reached this stage, so much the better" (p. 3).²

This love of pattern and logic for their own sake, being informed by zeal, character, knowledge, and a sharply critical intelligence, produces in this volume a meticulously discriminating grammar and handbook. Nearly forty rules, for instance, are allotted to the comma. About one-eighth of the book consists of an unusually competent presentation of word, pronunciation, and vocabulary. About five-eighths is devoted to grammar, syntax, diagramming, and punctuation. The rest is a partial rhetoric with chapters on the whole composition, the précis, the "research" paper, and like matters. Precision of treatment is everywhere—and an instinctive conservatism usually corrected by common sense.

Professor Wilson has been about in both language and literature. His bibliographies—sound, careful, useful—add to the text the weight of considerable authority; the illustrative sentences culled with love, industry, and conscience from great or well- or less-known writers give dignity and character, even a degree of beauty, to this book. Thus, despite the sales bait so teasingly dangled in the Preface, the volume is undoubtedly too advanced for slow sections. It is clear but often intricate; and one of its virtues is the insistent demand of its exercises upon the intelligence of the student.

It is difficult to do justice to the devil, but of bêtes noires this is one of the noblest. The sooner the formalistic approach to composition is abandoned, the better. The genre of formalistic texts is, however, with us; and among formalists Professor Wilson's *A Guide to Better English* is deserving of wide popularity.

ANDREW J. GREEN

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

¹ By George P. Wilson. New York: F. S. Crofts, 1942. Pp. xii+527. \$2.00.

² See also pp. v-vi, 155, 166, *et passim*.

THIS AMERICA¹

With the artistic restraint that makes forceful an appeal, a new anthology entitled *This America* has been set forth by Professors Kern and Griggs for college students. The editors say that the book has been designed to offer college students "an opportunity to join, during these critical years, in the current appraisal of the aims and values of our nation." While dealing with the present, the work has, in a singularly effective way, built on the past. Most of the authors represented have thought under the tutelage of great writers of the past. The very point that one of the authors made that "no one generation is capable of rediscovering all the truths men need"² has been taken into consideration in the making of this volume. One can easily discover in the work thoughts from Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Pascal, Rousseau, Milton, Newman, Jefferson, and many others, to name only a few. Admirably conceived for a purpose crucially significant, this work, modern though it is in respect to the authorships, should be stimulative to both students and instructors in the reasoning kind of study that the guiding of a new order will demand. It is heartening to note that this is an anthology of American thought that suggests explorations into the areas representing the most important of human interest values. Major problems with which the American people (and others) are concerned are held up for critical study. There are great thoughts in this book; these thoughts will set some minds on fire. They will bring action from certain of the young men and women who will read them and *think*. This type of textbook should be useful in bringing to pass the kind of education that Professor Kilpatrick says must be characteristic in the new order: "Acting on thinking must characterize all that is done."³

¹ Edited by John D. Kern, professor of English, and Irwin Griggs, assistant professor of English, at Temple University. New York: Macmillan Co., 1942. Pp. 824. \$2.50.

² Walter Lippmann, "State of Education," p. 295.

³ William H. Kilpatrick, "The Promise of Education," p. 261.

The book includes essays on national issues, science, radio, press, education, language, literature, art, people, and places; biography and autobiography; book reviews; research papers; and short stories. Among the authors represented are Walter Lippmann, Howard J. Trueblood, Thomas Rourke, Henry A. Wallace, Stuart Chase, Bruce Bliven, Simeon Strunsky, Frank Luther Mott, William H. Kilpatrick, Stringfellow Barr, William Rose Benét, Daniel Gregory Mason, Max Eastman, Louis Adamic, James Thurber, Clifton Fadiman, Ruth Suckow, John Steinbeck, Thomas Wolfe, Ernest Hemingway, and James T. Farrell. This amazing list could be augmented by as many additional impressive author-names.

As already implied, fundamental problems have been treated in this book—those that will demand the attention of post-war leaders. Such topics as the following have been given especially effective presentations: international policies, economic conservation, music, Latin-American relationships, the historical developments in the use of language, music for today, and education. Every work included seems to have bearing on the theme of the book which might be expressed in one of the Arthur Sweetser questions: "What policies shall we pursue?"⁴ This question is closely related to "Loyalties for 1941,"⁵ succinctly stated by Stuart Chase. Even the Frontispiece by Grant Wood and the prefatory quotation from Walt Whitman point up the theme of this timely book, which takes into consideration the past in terms of the present in suggesting that the young people of today take time by the forelock and plan for the future. Upper and lower classmen, faculty members as well, could profit by a thoughtful reading followed by a Socratic discussing of works brought to this anthology.

WILMA GARNETT

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

⁴ Arthur Sweetser, "America Seen from Abroad," p. 128.

⁵ Stuart Chase, "The New Patriotism," pp. 149-51.

IN BRIEF REVIEW

[Mention under this head does not preclude review elsewhere.]

FOR THE GENERAL READER

Look to the Mountain. By LeGrand Cannon, Jr. Holt. \$2.75.

So many novels of pioneers have appeared recently that one so fresh and compelling as *Look to the Mountain* comes as a surprise. Whit and Melissa left Kettleford, New Hampshire, in 1769 and journeyed northward up the Merrimack to a new country of lakes and streams. The story of their life together is very beautiful, and to share it as we do is to feel saner and surer of a future when people are no longer victims of hate and greed.

The Robber Bridegroom. By Eudora Welty. Doubleday. \$2.00.

Eudora Welty already holds a high place among American writers. In her latest book she has written a story of fantasy and imagination—of banditry and Indians and shy unearthly figures. It is a book to talk about, to share with others, to watch for secret meanings and haunting implications. The place (perhaps) is the Natchez country; the time (perhaps), the age of Mike Fink.

There Is Today. By Josephine Lawrence. Little, Brown. \$2.50.

The author of *If I Have Four Apples* has again written of everyday people and everyday problems. Young people today are faced with war. Shall they marry and have a few weeks or months of happiness before the boys are drafted? Miss Lawrence tells the story of Candace and Andy, of the choice they made, and of what the people about them thought and said and did.

The Horn of Life. By Gertrude Atherton. Appleton. \$2.50.

Lynn Randolph drove an ambulance in France during the first World War. Returning to California, she became a business woman—a somewhat uneasy, dissatisfied, but successful woman. Three men wanted to marry her. The reader, and Lynn, are not quite sure what choice she will make. The San Francisco historical background is significant.

Primer for Combat. By Kay Boyle. Simon & Schuster. \$2.50.

The American-born author of *White Horses of Vienna* has lived in France since 1922. Here she has written of her neighbors and friends, of turmoil and disaster and bravery and cowardice; of the French who risked all they had for their country and of others who feared democracy. An excellent picture of a bewildered, angry people embittered by Nazi conquest.

Treveryan. By Angela du Maurier. Doubleday. \$2.50.

None but Treveryans had ever lived in the beautiful stately house of that name on the wild Cornish coast. The eerie, tragic, romantic story of this old English family moves rapidly from climax to climax. Few readers will find their attention wandering.

Tacey Cromwell. By Conrad Richter. Knopf. \$2.00.

Tacey Cromwell was a girl with a past, and the good ladies of the church and town set a crown of thorns upon her brow. Tacey held a fierce yearning for respectability and love and family. Her story, written with the tenderness and pathos Richter has shown before, is a heartening one, a reaffirmation of human possibilities—the good in the worst of us, and. . . .

The Day Must Dawn. By Agnes Sligh Turnbull. Macmillan. \$2.75.

The author, whose ancestors were Pennsylvania pioneers, tells the common tale of many brave early settlers, especially of a mother and the philosophy which enabled her to live serenely and heroically, hoping for a better, easier life for her children. Mrs. Turnbull is particularly happy in presenting the homely details of pioneer life, the small pleasures and deep satisfactions of courageous, spirited people striving for better things for their children.

Grand Canyon. By V. Sackville-West. Doubleday. \$2.50.

The time is 1945; Great Britain has been defeated; the United States has defeated the Japanese and has made peace with Germany. A surprise attack is made on the United States. Among other places invaded is an airfield near the Grand Canyon. The author tells a fantastic and imaginative story of the invasion—the childlike stupidity of Americans and particularly of a group led to comparative (and unreal) safety by an English man and woman. The moral?

My Heart for Hostage. By Robert Hillyer. Random. \$2.50.

Paris, 1919: a young American officer, bored and lonely after two years of war, met a pretty French girl. A love affair followed, and the young man lingered in France. Both man and girl were sincere, but the American never quite understood or trusted the French girl. Some readers find the story symbolic of our present social skepticism. A convincing story told in beautiful prose.

The Complete Life. By John Erskine. Messner. \$3.00.

How to get the most out of living, with references to his own experiences. Good.

Crescent Carnival. By Frances Parkinson Keyes. Messner. \$2.75.

Set in modern New Orleans, reversing the usual order of novels about that glamorous city—its gossip, scandal, and carnivals and its wicked past.

One Destiny. By Phil Stong. Reynal & Hitchcock. \$2.50.

A war story but not a grim one. It concerns the Murdock family with boys in the war. Movie rights have already been sold.

The World of Yesterday: An Autobiography. By Stefan Zweig. Viking. \$3.00.

Artist, historian, and psychologist, Zwig writes of life in the world he has known. Illustrated.

America: The Story of a Free People. By Allan Nevins and Henry Steele Commager. Little, Brown. \$3.00.

How a wilderness environment modified an Old World culture and how intermixture of races has changed racial institutions.

Our Hearts Were Young and Gay. By Cornelia Otis Skinner and Emily Kimbrough. Dodd, Mead. \$2.50.

The authors re-enjoy their grand tour of France and England twenty years ago. Their sense of humor in ridiculous situations and their genius for expression make this a "funny" book invaluable for jaded readers.

Thorofare. By Christopher Morley. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.75.

A zestful story of a nine-year-old English boy who came to make his home in the United States in 1897. Uncle Dan had already become at home in the United States, but "the past is always present." When he returned to England for a visit, it was decided that his orphan nephew, Jeff, should accompany him back to America. Morley says the story was suggested to him by the experiences of British children sent to this country at the present time.

The American Tradition. Edited by Louis B. Wright and H. T. Swedenberg, Jr. Crofts.

The purpose of this anthology, the editors explain, is to suggest something of the qualities that have given to the United States "strength and the elements of greatness." Included are such documents as Patrick Henry's "liberty or death" speech and the Declaration of Independence as well as essays and short stories from many authors of the past and present. "America Speaking" describes this book, which enables us to see our country in perspective more clearly and gives greater dignity and force to American integrity and patriotism.

New Directions in Prose and Poetry, 1942. Edited by James Laughlin. Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions. \$3.50.

Writing, says the editor, goes stale and soft when innovators and nonconformists are stifled; tradition

and experiment—contrasted—make a lively literature. So, New Directions offers a survey of writing that lies outside commercial and conventional spheres, the work of the writers who, the editor believes, are attempting to be different at least, if not new. About twenty writers are represented. The editor stresses the responsibility of writers in effecting the economic re-education necessary if we are to have a better world after the war.

A Treasury of British Humor. Edited by Morris Bishop. Coward-McCann. \$3.00.

A companion volume to *A Subtreasury of American Humor*. Eight hundred pages of verse and prose, from Chaucer to Thirkell.

Innocent Merriment: An Anthology of Light Verse. Edited by Franklin P. Adams. Whittlesey. \$3.00.

The author says it was the condescending attitude of book reviewers that roused his ire and made him a defender of light verse. This volume contains only the verse which he has enjoyed reading. He concedes that most poets would prefer to write a great serious poem. Contents are grouped by types. The volume will arouse much "innocent merriment."

Storm over the Land: A Profile of the Civil War. By Carl Sandburg. Harcourt, Brace. \$3.50.

Largely drawn from *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, with some sections re-written; profusely illustrated with maps, drawings, and photos.

I Came Out of the Eighteenth Century. By John Andrew Rice. Harper. \$3.00.

This vivid picture of the southern way of life by a native-born South Carolinian and Rhodes scholar is co-winner, with Julian Green's *Memories of Happy Days*, of the Harper One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Anniversary Nonfiction Award.

My World—and Welcome to It. By James Thurber. Harcourt, Brace. \$2.50.

A rich and varied collection of humor and satire by the inimitable Thurber.

I Remember, I Remember. By André Maurois. Translated from the French by Denver and Jane Lindley. Harper. \$3.00.

All books by Maurois have been banned by the Nazis. This intimate story of his boyhood, his experiences in the first World War, his two marriages, and his election to a membership in the French Academy are related with a romantic simplicity. America, he says, "by refusing to ratify the guarantee of the League of Nations, rendered this war possible, even probable." He fled to America for protection and has recently taught in several of our colleges.

Victor Hugo. By Matthew Josephson. Doubleday. \$3.50.

The acknowledged leader of France's intellectual world, uncompromising in his fight for democratic principles, fled from dictatorship in times much like our own—to return to his country in triumph after twenty years. Josephson makes a realistic analysis of wide scope in writing of the many-faceted life of this man who dominated his times. The close parallelism to the present is pointed out by the author, who quotes Hugo as saying over and over, "A great people cannot die."

Willard Gibbs. By Muriel Rukeyser. Doubleday. \$3.50.

The word-using poet has written a tribute to a great scientist who spoke in symbols: "Mathematics is a language." The story opens with a slave-ship mutiny in 1839. The author is keenly interested in the scientific spirit and imagination, in the cultural traditions of the age in which Gibbs lived and thought. She groups together Melville, Whitman, and Gibbs and draws analogies between the James, Adams, and Gibbs families.

Virginia Woolf. By E. M. Forster. Harcourt, Brace \$1.00.

This essay, a poetic evaluation, was given as a Rede lecture at Cambridge in 1941.

Goals for America. By Stuart Chase. New York: Twentieth Century Fund. \$1.00.

A budget of our needs and resources. The second in a series of reports on post-war problems made by Chase.

World in Trance: From Versailles to Pearl Harbor. By Leopold Schwarzschild. Fischer. \$3.50.

"An authoritative history of Germany's war against the world in the years 1918-1939 as part of a thirty years' war, and the failure of the Allies to recognize and stay united against this undeclared and continuing assault." Never again conclude that power and armaments are wrong! All order and all civilization rest upon the existence of weapons and power. What to do when the war is over and how to meet post-war problems are challenging theses of this book. "In the business of enforcing peace there is no substitute for our own will and will power."

FOR THE INSTRUCTOR

On Native Grounds. By Alfred Kazin. Reynal & Hitchcock. \$3.75.

This book is an interpretation of American experience and American prose literature from the 1890's to the present. The center of the critical narrative is the democratic idea which has been expressed by realists, muckrakers, liberals, and radicals; the periphery is filled with exquisites, New Humanists, members of the lost generation, and formalists. A book which deserves the most careful reading.

The Epic of Latin American Literature. By Arturo Torres-Rioseco. Oxford University Press. \$3.00.

The first third of this book interprets South-American literature before the end of the nineteenth century, with emphasis upon its heroic and romantic phases. The rest of the book, mainly on the twentieth century, is divided into four parts: on modernism in poetry, gaucho literature (the literature of the pampas), the novel, and Brazilian literature. The North-American reader will appreciate both the concisely presented information about literary figures and movements and the clearly depicted background of the South-American landscapes and peoples.

Claremont Colleges Reading Conference: Seventh Yearbook, 1942. Claremont Colleges Library. \$2.50.

A valuable collection of forty papers by specialists, supervisors, and teachers representing all parts of the school system. The papers are scholarly, based on experience, and extremely varied in their contribution.

Man and Wife and Other Plays. By Augustin Daly. Edited by Catherine Sturtevant. ("America's Lost Plays," Vol. XX.) Princeton University Press. \$5.00.

Daly wrote melodramas such as *Divorce* and *The Big Bonanza*, or achieved what he called "original adaptations" of French plays, and produced them lavishly. He died in 1899. This volume concludes a beautiful and expertly edited series of American popular plays. Receiving aid from the Rockefeller Foundation, the project was sponsored by the Dramatists' Guild and edited, in general, by Barrett H. Clark.

Philosophy of American Education. By John T. Wahlquist. Ronald Press. \$3.25.

The author attempts to depict the various schools of thought and their implications for American education. He is "deliberately skeptical of unwarranted claims to finality and omniscience." In the first section of the book major philosophies are reviewed in turn; in the larger part of the book contemporary educational issues, such as secondary education and intelligence testing, are the principle of division.

Living Upstairs: Reading for Profit and Pleasure. By Francis Meehan. Dutton. \$2.50.

Personal essays about reading and living by a man who has known many books, places, and people. "Downstairs we greet the grocery boy. . . . Upstairs we entertain friends who inspire and encourage us." The Greek poets, writers of the Cressida story, the characters from the *Kalevala*, Montaigne, Browning, and Boswell are among the friends whom Mr. Meehan entertains.

Wings over the Classroom: An Anthology of Poetry Composed by the School Teachers of America. 2d ser. Harbinger House. \$3.00.

Sturdier binding, the addition of an index, and the fact that cash and literary awards were made by the publishers testify to the popularity of the venture, which is to issue a new edition of teachers' poems annually. Many of the poems included in the second series are reprinted from such varied sources as *Poetry*, *New York Times*, and *Christian Science Monitor*.

FOR THE STUDENT

Prophecies of Hope. Edited by Clyde Tull and Clifford Hand, Mount Vernon, Iowa: English Club of Cornell College.

The thoughts and feelings of college students in a warring world; poems of dread, anxiety, hope, and appreciation of daily experiences. The format is defective, but the printing is excellent.

The General Basic English Dictionary. Edited by C. K. Ogden. Norton. \$2.50.

Using only the 850 words of Basic English and the 50 international words that go with them, the *Dictionary* gives a knowledge of over 20,000 English words. The succinct and readily applicable definitions in this twentieth-century dictionary are opposite to the favorite transpositions from the familiar to the learned which are remembered from Dr. Johnson's eighteenth-century masterpiece. Two examples:

stagger, v. i. & t. Go with, take, uncertain steps as if about to have a fall. . . .

trust, i. n. Strong belief that person, thing, will not let one down, will do right, is true. . . .

The Psychology of Persuasive Speech. By Robert T. Oliver. Longmans, Green. \$2.75.

The author presents the basic factors in persuasion as self-interest, social consciousness, the speaker, and the occasion. He explains the techniques of persuasion and the skills of adaptation to the audience. Photographs of prominent men speaking before small or large groups and broadcasting illustrate the text.

Training the Speaking Voice. By Virgil A. Anderson. Oxford University Press. \$2.50.

Intended as a textbook for courses in voice-training, voice and diction, or fundamentals of speech—Part I: "The Voice"; Part II: "Diction for Speech"; Part III: "Practice Selections for Voice and Diction."

Modern Languages for Modern Schools. By Walter Vincent Kaulfers. McGraw-Hill. \$3.50.

A many-sided analysis of language-teaching for either the prospective or the practicing teacher. Scholarly "perspectives" of such problems as the teaching of pronunciation, grammar and reading, and vocabulary-building lead into chapters on the

issues of general language, college-preparatory work, and the reconstruction of the foreign-language curriculum.

Plot Outlines of 100 Famous Novels. Arranged and edited by Roland A. Goodman. New Home Library.

The advantage of this book is that it contains sections of French and Russian novels and one section of "Novels of Various Countries." An excellent choice of the world's masterpieces in fiction.

The Last Word in Make-Up. Dr. Rudolph G. Liszt. Dramatists Play Service. \$1.65.

A detailed analysis of the mechanics and the art of makeup, illustrated with drawings and photographs. The exposition proceeds from "Primary Course" through three courses of increasing difficulty and ends with "Post Graduate Course."

Opinions and Attitudes in the Twentieth Century. Compiled and edited by Stewart Morgan. 3d ed. Ronald Press. \$2.00.

A large closely printed but readable anthology, representing contemporary thought and the various styles of nonfiction prose. Selections from essayists, journalists, educators, critics, scientists, and statesmen are grouped under varied headings, including "Language and Literature," "Civilization," and "Democracy and the War." The first edition appeared in 1934. The present edition contains thirty-one new selections.

The Republic of Plato: A New Version Founded on Basic English. By I. A. Richards. Norton. \$2.50.

Twentieth-century readers may now discover Plato through the lucid medium of Basic English, which relieves one from the indirection of the nineteenth-century idiom as written by Jowett. Jowett's language is more beautiful and it permits more subtle distinctions in meaning. Mr. Richards' "Basic" is streamlined; without giving up any point in the argument, it shortens the *Republic* to less than half its previous length in English.

Writer's Guide and Index to English. By Porter G. Perrin. Scott, Foresman. \$2.00.

The *Writer's Guide* is about twice as long as the original *Index*. In the new section Mr. Perrin has included concise, well-illustrated, and always practical chapters on the varieties of English, paragraph composition, sentence structure, diction, grammatical essentials, the writing process, and the research paper.

The Complete Reporter. By Stanley Johnson and Julian Harriss. Macmillan. \$3.00.

A textbook which presents all types of news and editorial writing with abundant exercises. The processes of news collecting and writing are carefully explained with emphasis upon the everyday details of newspaper work.

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By W. POWELL JONES, *Western Reserve University*

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Foreword and Editorial Advice by HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

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